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the comics magazine • 90

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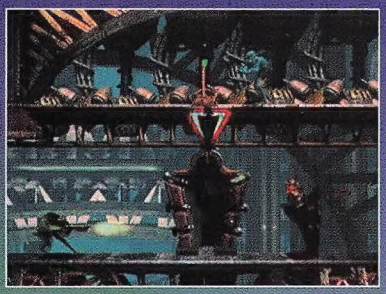
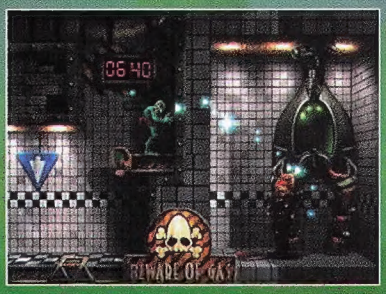


Flesh-eating Fleeches! Undead Mudombies! Bone-grinding Greeters!



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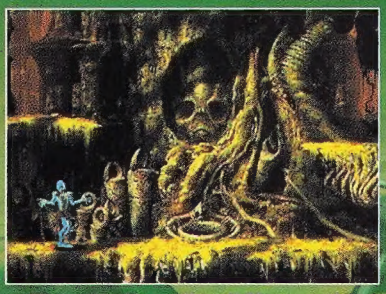

Abe gets all emotional! More panic! More talking! More pleading!

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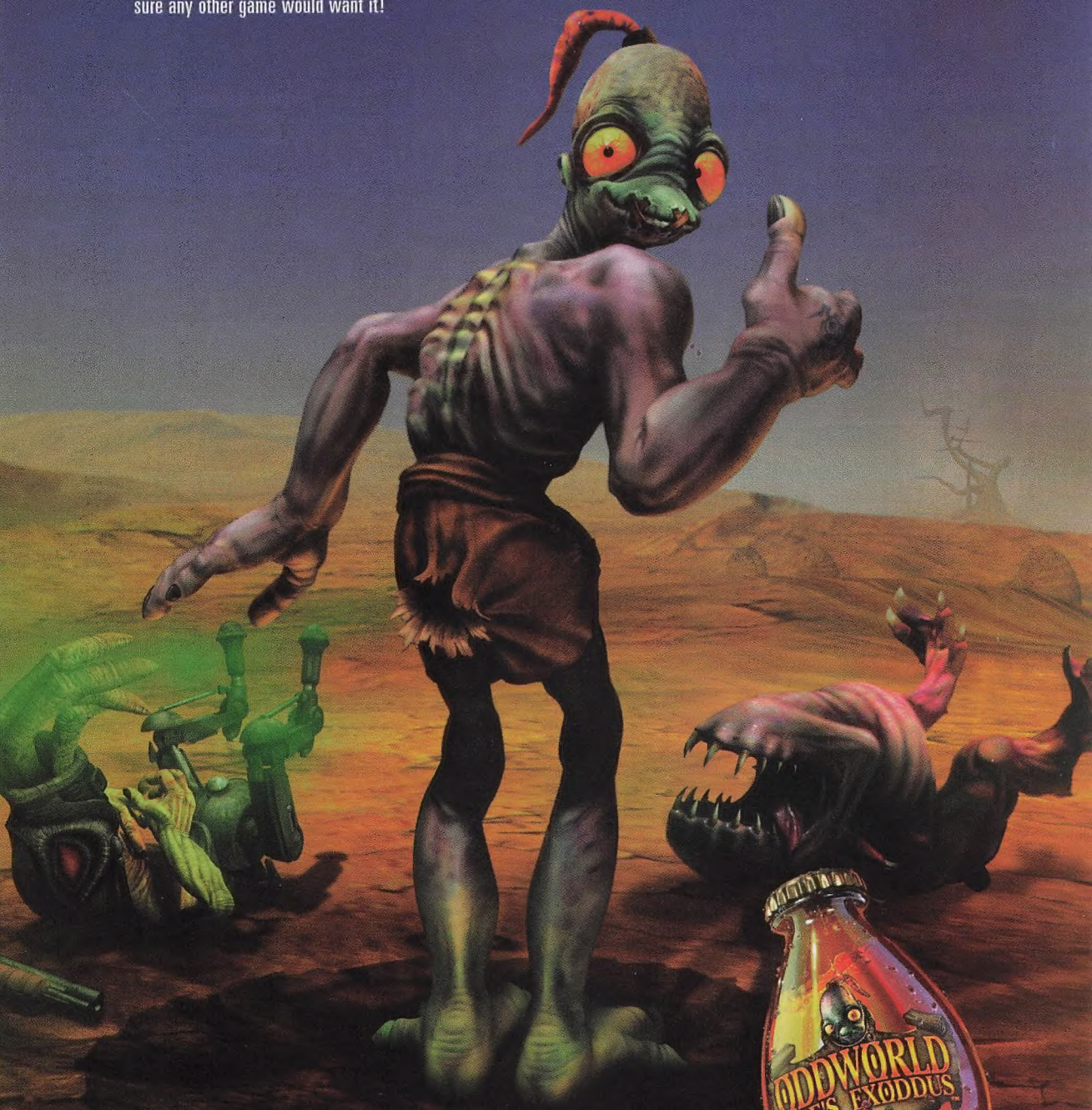

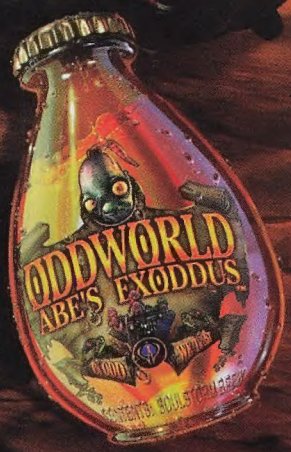

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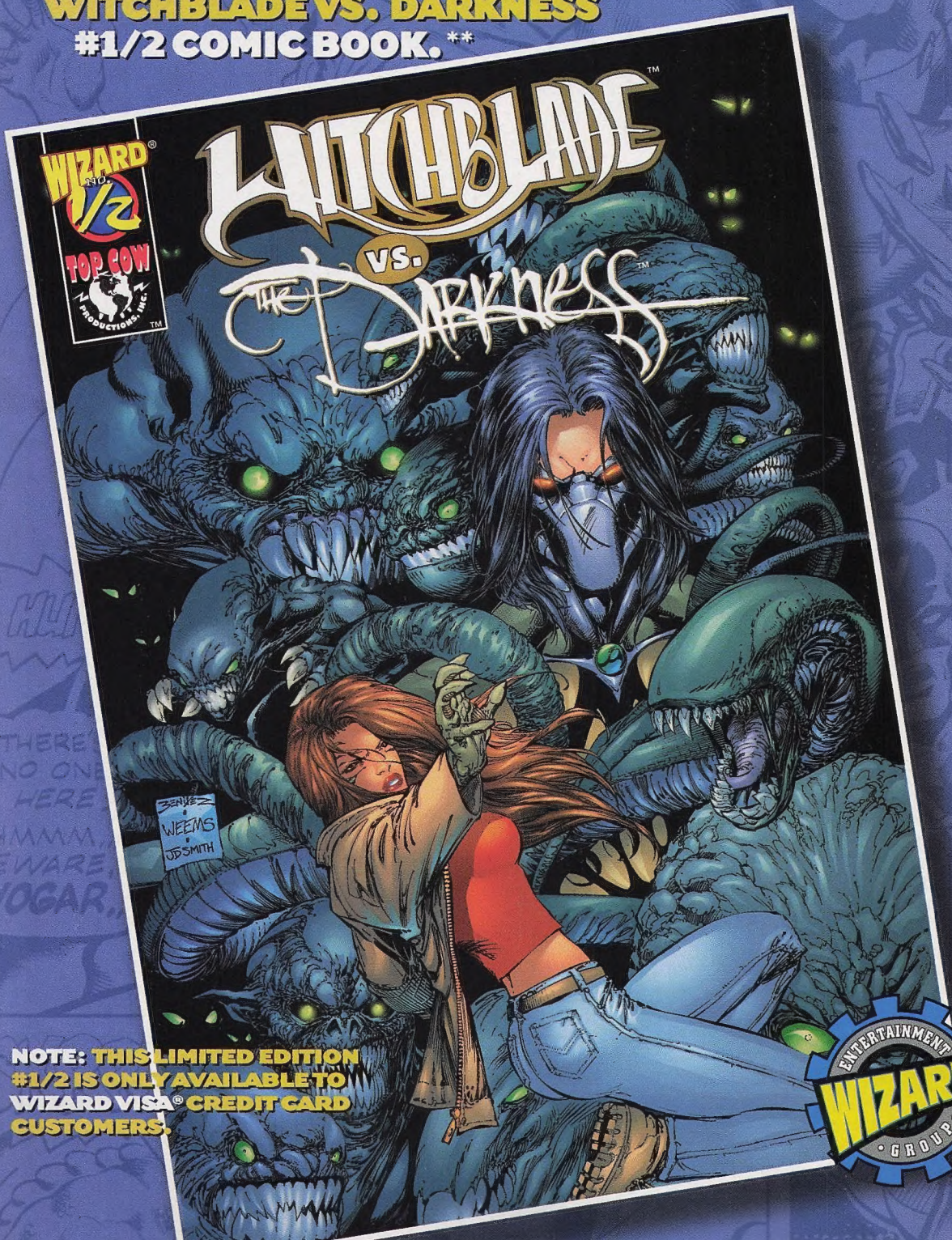

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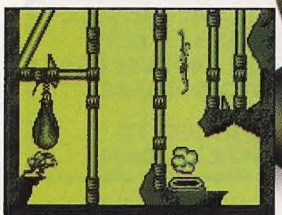
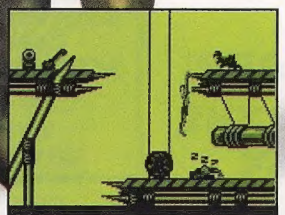
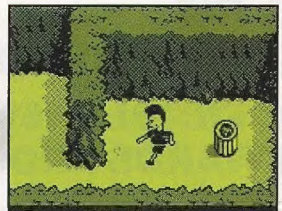


Abe's popping right into danger! Watch out - that Slig is armed!



It's always better to let sleeping Slogs lie...if you don't want to be a Slog snack!



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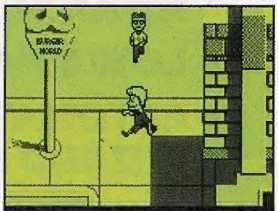

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WIZARD contents

THE COMICS MAGAZINE • NUMBER 90 • FEBRUARY 1999

HEY, OVER HERE!

Tying into our celebratory year-long countdown to the new millennium, *Wizard* looks toward the future in each 1999 issue. On **page 32**, take a look at the six creators destined to become tomorrow's superstars with **"Star Search."** After that, get the inside scoop on this year's hottest books with our **"1999 Preview"** on **page 50**. Just look for this "countdown" icon.

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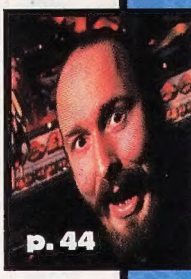
A sneak peek at the storylines of 1999's hottest books.
By Scott Brick and Jim McLauchlin

120 WIZARD FAN AWARDS
YOU DECIDE! Grab the ballot in the polybag and zoom here to find out how you place your vote for 1998's greatest books, characters, writers, artists, you name it.



ON THE COVERS

Wolverine (left) was illustrated by Leinil Francis Yu, and colored by Liquid Graphics. Skulk your way to **page 76** where Mr. Yu teaches you how to draw everyone's favorite Canucklehead. **Witchblade/Tomb Raider** was illustrated by Michael Turner and Joe Weems, and colored by Jonathan D. Smith. Dig to **page 80** to get your hands on a *Witchblade/Tomb Raider* #1/2 comic, and **page 104**, to win all sorts of cool Tomb Raider prizes.

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Snootchie Bootchies! Win yourself a stash of Kevin Smith swag! You can take home all three of the comic fan/director's films, San Diego Expo limited edition Jay and Silent Bob action figures, and variant comics, T-shirts and more!

104 TOMB RAIDER/WITCHBLADE

Help Witchblade find the hidden Lara Crofts and win yourself a Tomb Raider prize package including a Sony PlayStation!

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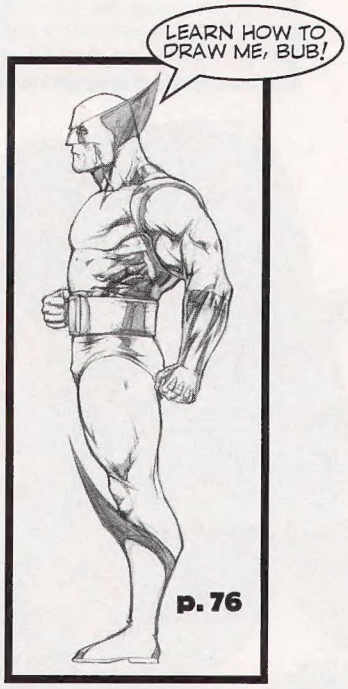

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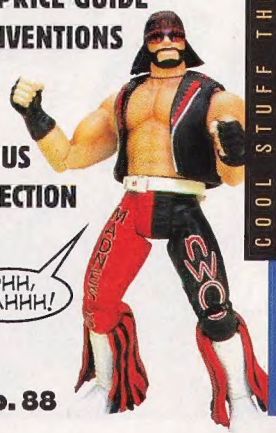

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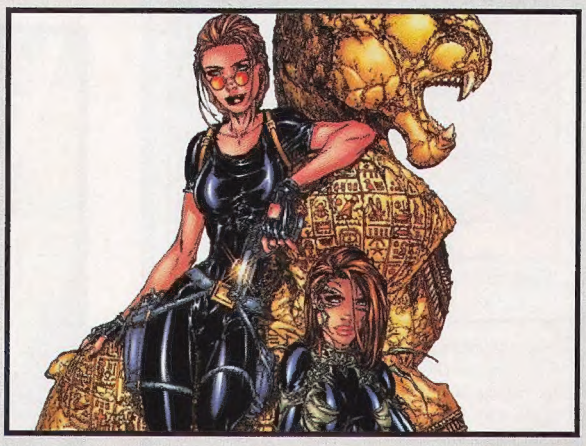
EXCLUSIVE OFFER

COOL STUFF THROUGH THE MAIL

WITCHBLADE/ TOMB RAIDER #1/2

Bloody hell! Here's your *only* chance to get the exclusive *Witchblade/Tomb Raider* #1/2 comic featuring Lara Croft and Sara Pezzini joining forces to take down the demon Wing Phat, by Michael Turner and Bill O'Neil! Skulk your way to **page 80**.



PHOTOS: PAUL SCHIRALDI

THEY ERASED MAGNETO'S MIND & STOLE HIS IDENTITY

THIS MEANS WAR!

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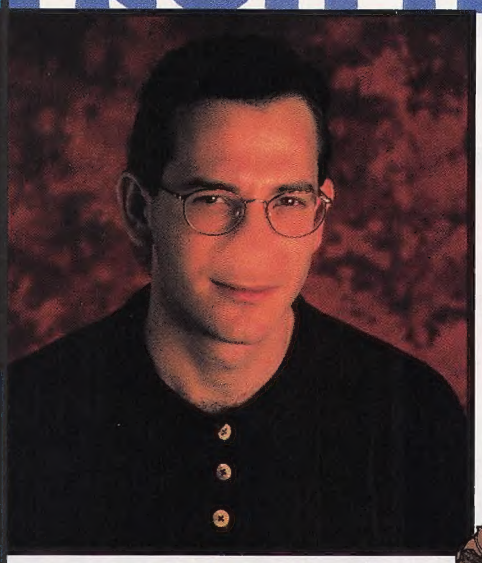

"ARSEFACE AUDITIONS TAKE SIX!"

THE MILLENNIUM APPROACHES

We're down to one full year before the big 2000. So this year *Wizard* is going to be dedicated to writing about the future of comics and comic entertainment. This month, we have our preview guide for 1999. We try to get as much insight into the coming year as humanly possible. After spending time speaking with most publishers, this year's lineup seems to be on track for one great year. We've got lots of new books from Todd McFarlane Productions and Top Cow Productions, too. Chaos! Comics will bring us the Undertaker—yes! Dark Horse has the year of Star Wars (finally, the new Star Wars movie will soon be upon us) and, of course, the very-hot Buffy of vampire slaying fame. We'll get to see the fruits of DC and WildStorm working together. And, of course, there's all the new offerings from Marvel. Oh yeah, and the new *Dawn* series will be out soon! Wow!

This month we have a feature that we only write once a year, where we spotlight who we think are the creators to watch out for. We've had a really good track record in the past—ever hear of Michael Turner or J. Scott Campbell?—and we've got a great new lineup for you this year, including Randy Green and Jay Anacleto. Never heard of 'em? Don't worry; you will.

Not only do we have a great #1/2 offer with two of the hottest women in comics—none other than Witchblade and *Tomb Raider*'s Lara Croft—but we also have an exclusive offer for a cool, new Bone toy (only available from Wizard Entertainment). Make sure you send in for both—it may be the last chance you get to put your hands on these.

We've got lots more to tell you about, so read on!

See ya,

Gareb S. Shamus

P.S Check us out on the Web at WizardWorld.com. You can sign up for the *Wizard* Visa card and get the most rare #1/2 we've ever done (*Witchblade vs. The Darkness*). This book is going to be worth lots of cashola—not to mention a good read.

P.P.S. Make sure you fill out your Fan Awards ballot found in the polybag!

* WHAT'S *TOMB RAIDER*'S LARA CROFT DOING HERE? TURN TO PAGE 104 FOR DETAILS.

MASTHEAD

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OUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION *Eat more pie*

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MAGIC WORDS

THESE LETTERS ARE NOT TO BE USED AS A LIFE-SAVING DEVICE

'THE KING' CHALLENGED... FALLING OFF THE EARTH... ...AND HOW TO NAME YOUR KID

Hey! What's with this serious stuff?

Glad you asked. It's "Variety Month" here at Magic Words Central. So, in an effort to prove I have slightly more depth than a wading pool, you'll find that our first couple of selections deal with subject matter that's a bit more weighty than our usual letters column missives. Those of you who crave intellectual stimulation (both of you) can feast on these ponderous pontifications of purple prose.

Meanwhile, the rest of you can wait around till we get groovin', at which point insults of a vicious and unwarranted nature will flow as usual. Hey, variety is the spice of life, right?

Dear Wizard,

I just found out DC's *Power of Shazam!* is being canceled. This move was made, in my opinion, too soon. Which gets me thinking....

Shouldn't there be an "early warning system" of sorts to draw attention to books threatened with cancellation? Books that died before being given a chance (such as *Aztek* or *Chase*) and established books losing steam (including *Sandman Mystery Theatre*) could both benefit. It may just be a matter of taste, but it's frustrating for me to hear cries for diversity from the superhero audience, only to see the books ignored upon delivery. Somebody in comics has to be close enough to these cancellations to alert the public.

Ben Zwolinski
Atlanta, GA

Sounds like a good idea in principle. The problem is, publishers don't agree.

"I think a 'cancellation warning system' would encourage some readers to drop the book and accelerate any sales deterioration," says Bob Wayne, DC Comics' veep of sales. "And many retailers who believe there would be less back-issue potential on a soon-to-be-canceled title would tighten their orders even further."

The flip side to this argument? Marvel's *Deadpool*. A few months ago, it was under the cancellation gun. And through simple word-of-mouth, people knew. But now, after a serious marketing push from Marvel with October's "Deadpool Month"—and readers rallying to the book—it's looking a lot healthier, and it's out of danger.

Your best bet? Be your own "early warning system." If you know of a book's impending demise, tell two friends. Hopefully, they'll tell two friends, and so on, and so on. Give it a shot. Hey, it worked with *Deadpool*.

Dear Wizard,

I've been a Christopher Priest fan ever since he went by the name "James Owsley." I'm jumping up and down that he and Mark Texeira have a new gig on *Black Panther*. But I'll give this series 14 issues before it gets canceled. Black comics don't sell.

Lisa Brimmels from the *Long Island Voice*, when writing about the much-missed Milestone Comics, said she thought it was because the predominately white comics audience doesn't think it can relate to comics involving a predominately black cast of characters. I remember that myself and a few other black customers were the only people buying Milestone comics toward the end of its run. The white customers steered clear of

Let there be Light

ALEX ROSS UNVEILS HIS FUTURE VISION OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE IN EARTH X:0, THE ESSENTIAL ORIGIN ISSUE!

WRITTEN BY
ALEX ROSS AND JIM KRUEGER
INTERIOR ART BY
JOHN PAUL LEON AND BILL REINHOLD
PAINTED COVER BY ALEX ROSS

THE 14-ISSUE ODYSSEY BEGINS JANUARY 27TH.

MARVEL COMICS

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BUNNY AWARD

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Jim takes his favorite letter and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Dear Jim,

In *Wizard* #80, movie director and *Daredevil* writer Kevin Smith said his life would be fulfilled if someone made Jay and Silent Bob action figures. Well, Graphitti Designs made them. Is his life fulfilled?

John Smith
Santa Maria, CA

Almost. Smith, who plays Silent Bob in his movies, says, "Once goals are achieved, new goals have to supplant them. I've now decided that my life won't be complete until I get my hands on an Oscar. I figure that's the next step. After all, the Academy Award is the next-best thing to the far-more-prestigious Bunny Award."

Good to see ol' Kevin has his sense of priorities in line.

them. This is a shame.

Why don't white readers feel they can relate to a character with high melanin content, but seem to relate fine to, say, a multi-millionaire paraplegic who has a flying wheelchair, can read minds and is engaged to an alien bird-woman? Beats me. But it's a damn shame. And unfortunately I don't see *Black Panther*—or any other comic—changing this any time soon.

George E. Jones Jr.
negatron@bellsouth.net

Ladies and gentlemen, Christopher Priest, who identifies himself as "an African-American": "Black comics don't sell? I agree. That's why I'm not writing one.

"*Black Panther* is based on a similar formula MD Bright and I created for *Quantum & Woody*, one that allows for culture and ethnicity of the characters without being exclusive of any reading audience. *Black Panther* is as much about Everett K. Ross, Panther's reluctant co-star, as it is about Panther himself. We're confident this decision will position *Panther* as mainstream fare, suitable for a wide audience.

"If we can get beyond people's resistance to trying something new, they'll see the race of the hero is the least relevant thing in the book. As king of an African nation, there is no denying the Panther's ethnicity, so we hardly have to clobber anyone over the head with it. He could be king of Scotland. It doesn't matter.

"I think you can produce a work about a black character without the work being about race. I think we have a unique formula in *Panther*. At least that's what we're hoping. Try it. Or at least think about it."

It sounds reasonable. 'Cause when you get right down to it, a good comic is a good comic regardless of what color the characters are. And *Black Panther* is lookin' like a good comic.

Dear Jim,

In *Wizard* #86, you guys played a word-association game with the Marvel Knights crew. Kevin Smith said that he didn't "get" Jack Kirby, and Jimmy Palmiotti said he'd make Smith understand. I don't get Kirby either. Could you explain?

Martin Cloonan
London, England

I'll do better than explain. I'll have Jimmy Palmiotti explain. Jimmy says: "Y'know, I never got the chance to explain this to Kevin. So Kev—listen up!

"Jack Kirby was an innovator in the way comic books are drawn. His stuff just leapt off the page at you. At a time when everything in comics was drawn inside panels, he was the first to break the borders. Everything he did came right at the reader.

"And he had an imagination that never quit. Lots of guys created characters; Jack created whole worlds. What he and Stan Lee did on the first 100 issues of *Fantastic Four* laid the groundwork for the entire Marvel Universe. Then he went over to DC and did it all again with his *New Gods* work.

"Some people today might look at his work and say, 'Oh, that guy's head is too big in that panel.' But that's just nit-picking. His art was always the most dynamic. And no matter what he drew, he made you believe it. That's why they called him Jack 'King' Kirby. That's why he's still the King."

Amen.

Dear Magic Words,

Why does *Batman* artist Kelley Jones draw Batman like a 50-foot cape with arms? And is Adam Warren going to do that Dirty Pair/Superman team-up, or is it still up in the air?

Jonathan Abbott
Silver Spring, MD

Jones, the former *Batman* artist who brings a...singular...take to the Caped Crusader, says, "Unlike the vast majority of superheroes, Batman has a cape that's a unique element. Batman's just a regular man. His only 'power' is that he's intimidating. And he puts that cape and cowl on to scare the bad guys.

"If you draw the cape realistically, it just looks dorky. But draw it big and swirling, and it looks intimidating. It looks scary. It just looks Batman."

Meanwhile, Adam Warren regrets to inform us that the team-up between Supes and the manga duo known as the Dirty Pair has been shot down out of the air.

BUNNY PHOTO: PAUL SCHIRALDI

HEY! IT'S PEN PALS...

Send your name, address, age, sex and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address at the end of this column (put your age on the envelope). The only way to get your Internet address listed instead is to post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look in the Wizard Bulletin Board, under Message Boards). **Pre-'98 entrants:** Please resend your entries.

Warren is currently entertaining a few proposals for an ongoing writing gig. We'll keep ya posted.

Dear Wizard,

Whatever happened to pencilers Paul Smith, Art Adams and Kieron Dwyer? I think they're really talented, but they seem to have fallen off the face of the Earth.

Denny Keaton
Kansas City, MO

Paul Smith, who gained fame 15 years ago as the penciler for *Uncanny X-Men*, is still in the game on Homage Comics' *Leave it to Chance*. And *Monkeyman and O'Brien*'s Art Adams keeps himself busy with a boatload of small projects, most recently a *Danger Girl* one-shot for Dynamic Forces.

But Kieron Dwyer, formerly of *Action Comics*, has fallen off the face of the Earth. He's climbing back now and readying *Lowest Comic Denominator*, a mind-numbingly gross humor project, for a 1999 release.

Dear Jim,

Could you tell me which issues of DC's *All-Star Squadron* have Jerry Ordway artwork?

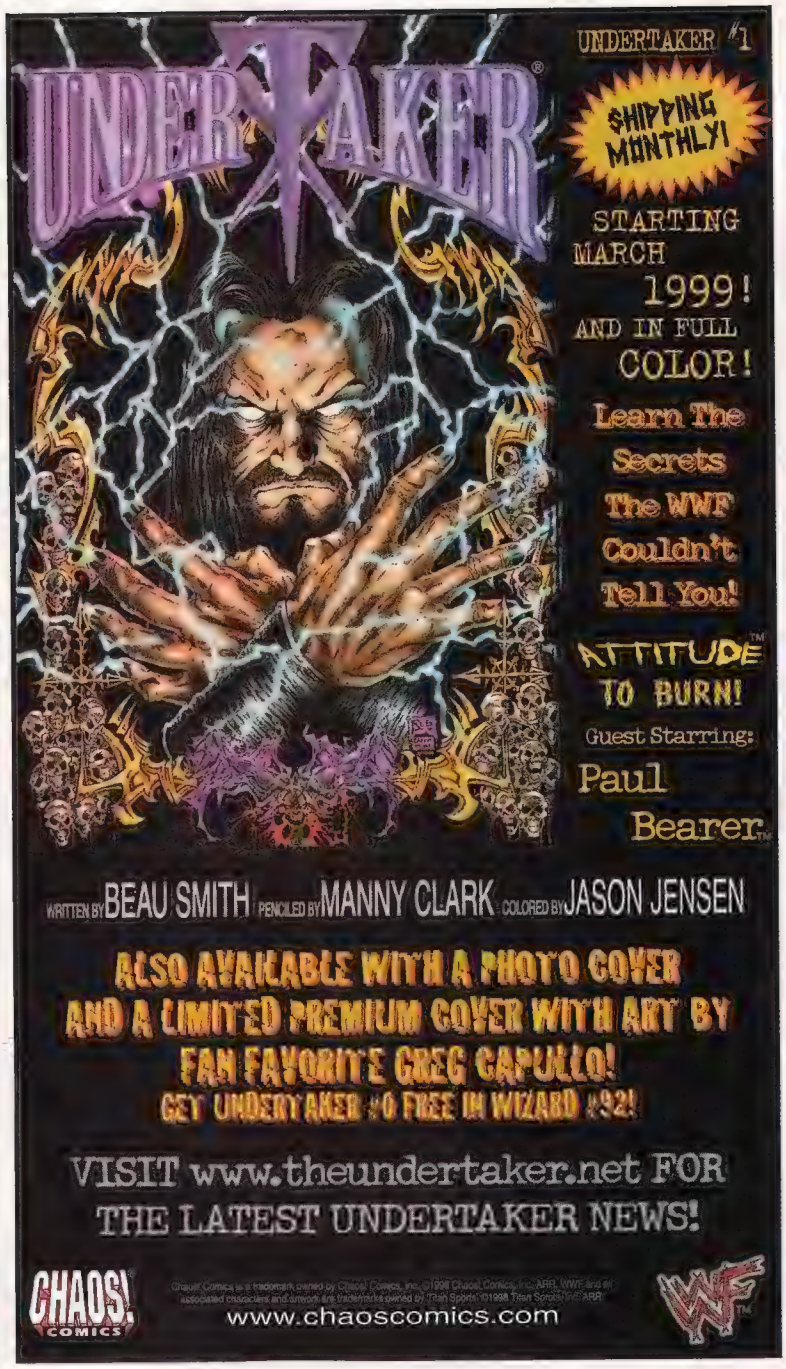
And by the way, I hate to ask this question, but...is Jerry Ordway still alive?

Felix Saputra
Ames, IA

***All-Star Squadron*, a title that focused on the Justice Society of America and a ton of low-tier and seldom-seen DC heroes from the World War II era, featured Jerry Ordway art right from its start: Ordway did finishes on a (Tee-hee!) A-SS preview in *Justice League of America* #193, then finished #1-#15 of the ongoing series. He later penciled #19-#26, and #29. The Ordster did all this work during the happy-go-lucky "Duran Duran" years of 1981-1983.**

And you may hate to ask it, but Ordway, late of DC's *Power of Shazam!*, is happy to answer your other question. "Yeah. I'm still alive," he says. "Although I may look into getting a better agent, having heard this question."

Okay, but I'd recommend staying away from whoever's been representing Kieron Dwyer.



Dear Jim,

After reading the wonderful *Understanding Comics* by Scott McCloud, I am in amazement. Are there any other books about comics like this? McCloud mentioned a book by Will Eisner several times. Is this book readily available?

Adam Edward Ham
Decatur, IL

CURT GREGORY
Age: 23 Sex: Male
3179 Vanderhoof Rd.
Clinton, OH 44216
Likes: Indiana Jones, James Bond, *Preacher*

GRIFFIN
Age: 16 Sex: Female
14 Edwards Place
Flatrock, NF, Canada A1K1C6
Likes: *X-Men, Uncanny X-Men, Witchblade*

JOSH HEATH
Age: 17 Sex: Male
2630 N. Pacific Hwy.
Woodburn, OR 97071
Likes: *Shi, Gen13, Re:Gex*

CHARLES "CHAZ" HEINE
Age: 12 Sex: Male
129 Farmer Ave.
Selden, NY 11784
Likes: *Spawn, Vampirella*

MICHAEL JOHNSON
Age: 16 Sex: Male
10239 Snowhill Rd.
Ooltewah, TN 37363
Likes: *Johnny the Homicidal Maniac, Evil Ernie, Gen13*

BENNY G. LEAL
Age: 26 Sex: Male
Rt.1 , Box 1000 (#720728)
Navasota, TX 77869
Likes: *Spawn*, Top Cow titles, drawing comics

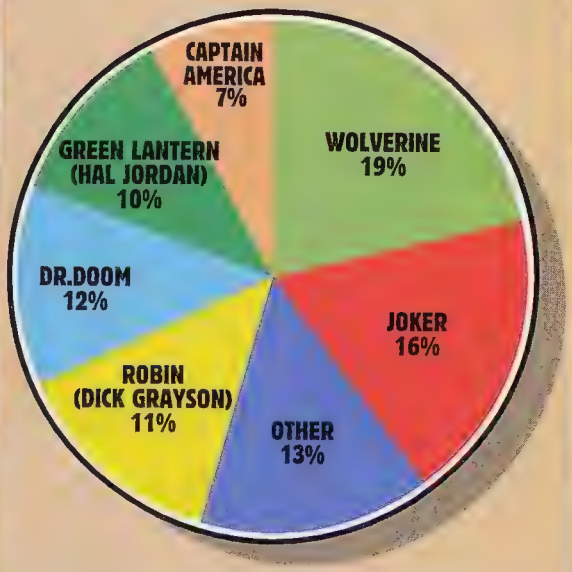
MARIO MAMEDE
Age: 17 Sex: Male
Farmácia Monteiro
Aldeia Nova, Agrela (Portugal)
4780 Santo Tirso
Likes: *Preacher, Lobo, Hitman*

Comics and Sequential Art is the how-to book by Will Eisner that McCloud mentioned. And lo! And behold! Eisner was even kind enough to do a sequel titled *Graphic Storytelling*. Both are in print, and should be available for order through your local comic shop. If ya can't get 'em there, call the publisher: Kitchen Sink Press can be reached toll-free at (800) 365-7465. Tell 'em *Wizard* sent ya. 'Cause if 100 of you call in, I get a free coffee mug.

SURVEY SAYS

ONLINE QUESTION OF THE MONTH

WHAT CHARACTER SHOULD GET A 'YEAR ONE' SERIES?



People enjoy carnage and mystery. Wolverine *is* carnage and mystery.

In our "who do ya wanna see star in a 'Year One' book" online poll (www.wizardworld.com), Wolverine clawed through Doctor Doom and the Joker to take 19 percent of the vote. "Heck, I'd even give blood to see that," one fan responded. "Nobody can get enough of that lovable, furry, razor-sharp scamp." And that scamp slices through the competition.

The write-in votes for this particular poll were untraditionally numerous and absurdly varied, resulting in a whopping 13 percent for our "Other" category of write-ins. Every character from the Transformers to Galactus to Wizard Entertainment president Gareb Shamus all received one or two write-ins for their own "Year One" mini-series or storyline. The king of the write-ins, however, was Magneto, who came in right behind Captain America with a surprising 5 percent of the total vote. ■ NACHIE CASTRO

Dear Jim,

What advice would you give a young kid who wants to become a penciler for Marvel Comics?

Jake Lambert
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

In school, take as many art classes as possible, of course. While you're at it, load up on anything that teaches storytelling. Creative writing and literature classes are good places to look. And, if your school offers an anatomy course, go for it. You'll probably get to dissect something, and the knowledge you pick up on how things are put together will become incredibly valuable when it comes to drawing figures.

Always remember to eat all your vegetables. And fer cryin' out loud, don't run with scissors. You'll put an eye out, kid.

And look into truck driving as an alternate career, just in case.

Dear Jimbo,

What's the hardest part of making a superhero or supervillain?

Randy Wang
Alta Loma, CA

The intestines. Man, did you know that the average human has 13 feet worth of intestines in his body? That's a lot to make.

Dear Jim,

JLA #19 featured a story which I enjoyed very much, but was still baffling to me: Members of the JLA shrunk down to the size of photons in order to repair the atoms responsible for their troubles.

So how was Green Lantern able to use light, the source of his power? Light—even Green Lantern light—consists of photons. But GL was the size of a photon, so you would expect that he was too small to have (much larger) light emanate from his ring. Is that right? Or do I just think too much?

Chris Harmantzis
Argos, Greece

Hey! Let's ask Mark Waid, who both wrote that issue and is the quasi-official Dr. Science of "Magic Words." The professor says: "Who says light is the source of Green Lantern's power? Light may be the physical manifestation of his power, but not necessarily its source. Think of the sun. Light does not 'power' the sun, but the sun still gives off light."

Waid's right. No less an authority than *Green Lantern* editor Kevin Dooley confirms that GL's ring is powered by his Green Lantern battery, which is in turn juiced with the energies of the Guardians of the Universe.

And just in case you're looking to get nit-picky, Waid already cleared up how light, even as a "physical manifestation," could be comin' out of Green Lanten's ring: The Atom, an experienced small-size

JOSH NORDYKE
Age: 16 Sex: Male
0-15 Ravenswood Dr.
Grandville, MI 49418
Likes: *The Tick, Major Bummer, Battle Chasers*

BRYSON PAUL
Age: 14 Sex: Male
621 Cantleberry Ln.
Bakersfield, CA 93304
Likes: X-titles, *Witchblade*, drawing comics

DANIEL PEAK
Age: 16 Sex: Male
140 El Norte Parkway
Escondido, CA 92026
Likes: *X-Men, Cable, X-Man*

COLE ROOT
Age: 12 Sex: Male
P.O. Box 110
Centralia, IL 62801
Likes: *The Coven, Witchblade*, all Chaos!

BERNARD CALVERT SARPA
Age: 14 Sex: Male
Rua Tabajaras 103,
Niterói 24360-220 RJ–Brazil
Likes: all Spidey, Supes, Image titles

JUSTIN SLOCUMB
Age: 21 Sex: Male
1866 Felton McMicheal Rd.
Monticello, GA 31064
Likes: X-titles, *Spider-Man*, most DC comics

MELANIE CRUZ
Age: 23 Sex: Female
Alma, San Isidro, Nueva Ecija
3106–Philippines
Likes: *Wolverine, WildC.A.T.s, Spider-Man*

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LETTER ART

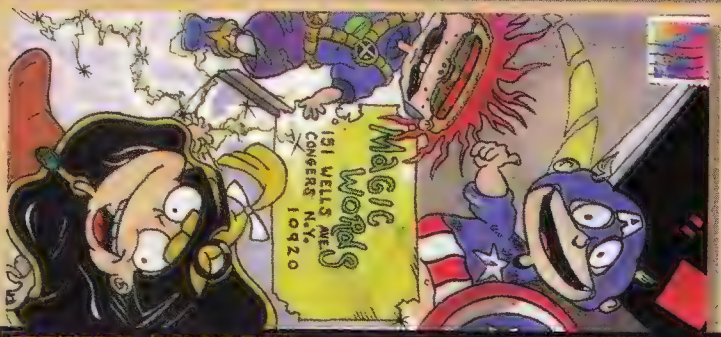
Each fan who has letter art printed this month will receive a signed issue of the *XStacy* comic. They'll also receive a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff (or at least those who make it back from the New Year's Eve party). The talented creator of this month's best envelope scores a signed issue of *XStacy Libretto*, plus an original sketch of XStacy drawn on the rare variant of the sold-out issue of *XStacy*! Thanks to Franchesco for providing the cool swag. Artists, don't forget to include a clearly printed return address and a list of characters depicted on the back of your envelope. We mean it! Good luck!

ENVELOPE OF THE MONTH.....THE PRIZE

BATMAN Donny G. Kusuma Surabaya, Indonesia

X-MEN KIDS Ian Anthony Li Seattle, Washington

NIGHTWING Jason A. Hanks Springville, Utah



MARVEL RUGRATS Charles Perry Sanford, Florida

traveler, told the team that at these micro-sizes, your brain processes your perceptions into something familiar so you don't go insane. The JLA was used to seeing light coming out of GL's ring, so they saw light coming out of GL's ring.

The message here is clear: You do think too much. And so does Mark Waid. Never, NEVER mess with that man when it comes to comic book trivia.

Dear Jim,

My wife and I are huge comic fans. We would like to name our soon-to-be son or daughter (Due April 1999!) after a great comic character. Got any ideas? Otherwise, we will have to go with "Dogwelder" for a boy or "Big Barda" for a girl.

Thad Humphrey
cygnus@flash.net

Well, "James Joseph McLauchlin Humphrey" has a nice ring to it.

If not that, you might want to do what John Bogdanove, former *Superman: The Man of Steel* penciler, did. He named his son "Kal-El," Superman's Kryptonian name.

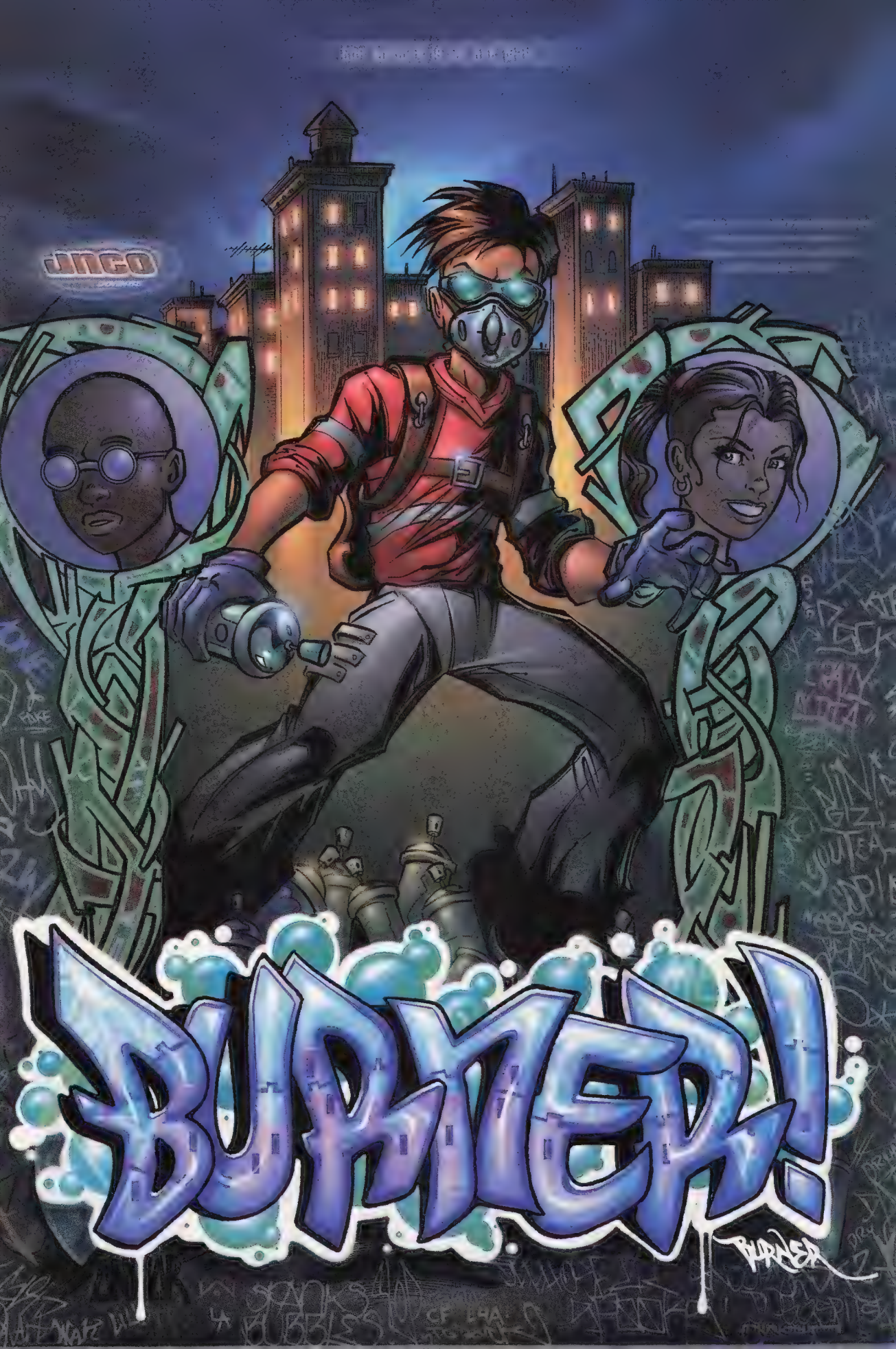
But I'm sure that any name you choose will be a good one. It's apparent that you and your wife share a deep love, both of each other and of a mutual hobby. It's best when people such as you breed amongst your own kind, and we thank you for adding another consumer to purchase our magazine.

Yep. That's a wrap. Keep sendin' your letters, envelope art and birth announcements to the address below. Until next month, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

There's nothing funny about hemorrhoidal itch, and nobody knows that better than big Jim McLauchlin. He'd risk his neck to save your butt.

Send letters to:
Magic Words
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920
or e-mail us at WizWords@aol.com


JINGO
BURNER!
BURNER

NEW ARTISTS HEAD TO 'X-MEN' BOOKS

'Magneto' mini-series planned; quest for writers continues

Brandon Peterson is in. Adam Kubert is now permanently in. Chris Bachalo is out. And where does that leave Leinil Francis Yu?

While the search for an ongoing writer (or writers) for *X-Men* and *Uncanny X-Men* continues, one creative element on comics' biggest franchise has just stabilized—the artists.

Former *Incredible Hulk* artist Adam Kubert takes the reins on *Uncanny X-Men* with March's #368. And over on *X-Men*, Brandon Peterson will become the regular with June's #91 after six-month guest-artist Alan Davis finishes his stint.

"We thought Adam and Brandon were the best choices," X-editor Mark Powers said. "They're both interested in the books, and they're both very passionate about their work."

Passion has never been a problem for Kubert, who gained fame with powerful, dynamic art on Marvel's *Wolverine* and *Hulk*. However, keeping a schedule has been problematic. "I did four issues of *X-Men* as a fill-in," he said. "I had never done a team book before, but I found I really, really liked it. So I asked to become permanent."

Schedules lined up so that Kubert could become permanent on *Uncanny*. Now, it remains to be seen what Kubert can do with the schedule. "Adam starts drawing in November for the March issue of *Uncanny*," Powers said. "Hopefully, he can do 10 or 12 issues a year. And if he's going to miss one, we can plan for it in advance."

Kubert said he's realistically shooting for 10 issues a year. Should he miss an issue? Yu, the *Wolverine* penciler who was previously planned as an ongoing X-Men artist, is available. "I do think the others will do a better job," said Yu, who's accepting a pinch-hitter role with no hard feelings. "I may be moved over to few fill-ins or mini-series. I also wouldn't mind

"WHO'S GONNA DRAW ME?" Relax, Magneto. Adam Kubert will take over *Uncanny*, and Brandon Peterson will pencil *X-Men*. But where does that leave Leinil Yu, who was supposed to draw one of the books?

PETERSON

KUBERT

PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHRALDI.

doing non-X-related titles. So I'm open to anything. As of now, I'm the unofficial fill-in for the X-books."

Yu gets fill-ins on *Uncanny X-Men* #366-#367, after outgoing artist Bachalo departs for a new creator-owned series (see story, page 25). "With the change in Marvel ownership and with [former writers] Joe Kelly and Steve Seagle leaving, I figured I'd move off," Bachalo said. "Marvel was nice enough to let me out of my contract."

And over on *X-Men*, Peterson is ready to roll after he warms up on the upcoming *Magneto Rex* mini-series (see sidebar). "It's where I wanted to go. I'm lucky it became available," Peterson said. "I want to do a 50-issue run on *X-Men* if I can. I want to be on this as long as humanly possible."

Peterson, who wrote and drew the creator-owned *Arcanum*, is also looking forward to throwing in his two cents' worth on plotting the books. "The editors have always thought that the best periods of this book have been when the artists have been involved—the John Byrne period [in the late 1970s], the Jim Lee period [in the late 1990s]." Peterson said. "We've talked a lot about what kinds of things I'd like to do."

But any of those things would require a new, permanent X-Men writer. Davis is filling in for a few months, and former *X-Men* and current *Gambit* scribe Fabian Nicieza has signed on to script over Davis' plots for a five-part story, Nicieza starts with January's *Magneto War* one-shot and moves through two January and two February issues of the X-titles. "It's an opportunity to work with Alan Davis, which is something I've always wanted to do," Nicieza said. "And it's a good, simple story that's not overly angst-filled. It's cool."

But Nicieza does not see himself as a permanent solution. "I'm really having a good time writing *Gambit*, so for now, I'm content," he said. Other insiders have pointed to up-and-coming *Cable* writer Joe Casey as a possible permanent X-Men writer. Casey said only "no comment" when asked about his prospects for the job. (For more on the difficulties of keeping X-writers, see feature on page 38.)

Still, Powers thinks the new artists add stability to the X-universe. "We're getting everything in line," Powers said. "The last piece of the puzzle is writing. And we should have that piece soon." ■ JIM McLAUCHLIN

Marvel Knights Joe Quesada takes more than the recommended "only a capful" of NyQuil, goes on sniffle-free pantsless rampage. "It was like using binoculars to stare into the sun. I think I'm blind," said broken eyewitness.

New anti fat-chick armor a total bust. "He's got Peanut M&M's... I can smell'em!" exclaimed fat chick moments before penetrating the anti-cellulite defenses.

Two single guys theorize what sex is like at local comic con. "My hand is killing me," said virgin.

PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHRADER

LOOK WHO'S BACK

MAGNETO: KING FOR A DAY?

What Magneto wants, Magneto gets. This time, he wants an entire country.

Magneto Rex is a three-issue mini-series launching in March that provides a warm-up for new *X-Men* artist Brandon Peterson and the Marvel debut of writer Joe Pruett (*Dusty Star*). And as the title might imply (it's Latin for "King Magneto"), Magneto takes over a country to establish a new base of power, and sets himself up as a force to be reckoned with. Just what country it will be is being kept a secret by the X-office.

"Magneto wants a haven, a place where he can say to all mutants, 'Come here, you'll be safe,'" Pruett said. The main problem? The United Nations fears he's assembling a mutant army.

At such a point, you might expect the X-Men to come running in. But due to events in the team's own books come March, they're unavailable. Only Rogue and Quicksilver will appear in this series.

The upshot? Magneto is back in a big way, and scarier than he's been in years. "We definitely make him more a villain, but still a villain with that gray area," Pruett said. But no one in the Marvel Universe sees that gray. "The rest of the world looks at Magneto in this new position, and the world is scared. And there's nothing they can do about it." ■ JM

'DARK AGES' SPAWNS NEW TITLE

Focus shifts from present-day Al Simmons to Medieval Spawn

What sets the new *Spawn: The Dark Ages* ongoing series apart from the original *Spawn* title? "About 900 years," according to Brian Holguin, who co-writes the current *Spawn* and will write the spin-off due to hit stands in March.

With *The Dark Ages*, the focus shifts from present-day Spawn Al Simmons to Medieval Spawn, a character introduced way back in *Spawn* #9. Holguin, who will be joined on the series by gothic horror penciler/inker Liam Sharp (*Man-Thing*), said he plans to use the new series to fill the blanks in Medieval Spawn's past.

But Al Simmons diehards should find interest in the new title as well. Although the two Spawn series are not directly related, characters from the original *Spawn* who have been around for a very long time—such as Cog, the ancient Hellspawn—will make appearances in *The Dark Ages*. And the connections don't end there.

"We're setting it up so that villains that first appear in the Medieval series will come back in the current *Spawn*," explained Holguin. "Since I'm doing both books, I'm making it so you're not required to read both of them. But they will dovetail nicely, and you'll get a little more insight if you do read both."

Holguin said both he and Sharp are researching heavily to make sure the stories and art of the new series accurately reflect the time period—albeit with fantastical horror elements. In fact, readers shouldn't be surprised to learn the Spawn mythos is connected to some of the nastier aspects of Europe's medieval past. "We're going to see the secret, nasty history of the Spawn-verse Europe," warned Holguin. ■ SCOTT A. AUBREY

SPAWNING GROUND Artist Liam Sharp provides visuals to *Dark Ages*, starring the Medieval Spawn.

THEBUZZBIN

THE INSIDE SCOOP ON THE COMIC INDUSTRY

MORE DANGER! MORE GIRLS! As if four wasn't enough, rumor has it creator J. Scott Campbell will be adding a fifth Danger Girl operative to *Danger Girl* by mid-1999.

BIG CHANGES FOR BIG BLUE! Guaranteed: Changes won't take place until April-shipping books at the earliest, but 1999 will see massive upheaval in the Superman line. Old creators will be departing and the "linked" format of the books might also change.

JIM LEE GETS VERTIGO? Count on it. New WildStorm/DC Comics exclusive artist Jim Lee is interested in going "mature readers" with a story in a 1999 Vertigo anthology. And Lee may also draw one of the "Preacher Gallery" pinups slated for *Preacher* #50

CLIFFHANGER BULKS UP! It seems as if the summer of '99 will see the first expansion of Cliffhanger, as WildStorm is looking to add one title to the three-book line. Word on the drum also says that a few prominent Hollywood personalities are interested in starting creator-owned Homage Comics series, and Homage may expand by two or three titles.

'DIVINE' CATS! Writer Scott Lobdell is poppin' up everywhere, including *Divine Right*, where he's scripting over Jim Lee's plots, and the *Wildcats* relaunch. Think the two high-profile books might cross over? Buzz is Lobdell's tryin' to line it up for summer '99.

KEVIN SMITH WRITES AGAIN! It's a little trickier than his other movie tie-in comics 'cause he doesn't own all the rights, but Kevin Smith is tryin' hard to get the rights to do a *Mallrats* comic adaptation.

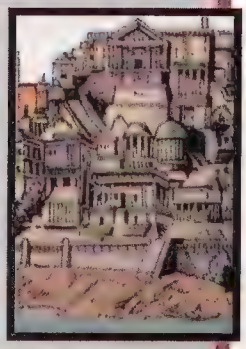
PHOTO BY PAUL SCHRAUER

SMITH

we looked it up

WHO? WHERE? WHY?

THE•MYS•CIR•A (the mes SEER uh); proper noun, DC Universe. ancient times-present; 1. Island from which Wonder Woman hails; she was chosen to leave to enter the outside "man's world" 2. Nation founded by the Amazons; women whose mission is to teach peace throughout the world 3. You can just say "Paradise Island" if ya want. Trust us. It's so much simpler.

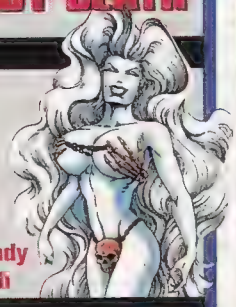


breast of friends

FACE-OFF

Call it the battle of the busts. Yep, comics' biggest bad girls, Vampirella and Lady Death, go for each others' jugular in the two-part *Vampirella/Lady Death: Dark Hearts* crossover in February, courtesy of Harris and Chaos! Comics. But who's the baddest of the bad? *Wizard* cuts through the cleavage to find out whose cup runneth over.

VAMPIRELLA vs. LADY DEATH



CUP SIZE	
D	DD Edge: Lady Death
COMPLEXION	
Tanned Edge: Vampi	Pasty
PUPILS	
Yes Edge: Vampi	No
HAIR STYLE	
Long and silky Edge: Vampi	Jersey-girl big
VICTIMS	
Vampires	Everyone Edge: Lady Death
SNACK FOOD OF CHOICE	
Blood, the crimson elixir of life	Life Edge: Lady Death
DOES DATING HER COUNT AS NECROPHILIA?	
No Edge: Vampi	Yes

AND THE WINNER IS...

...and by a 4-3 margin, Vampi barely strips Lady Death of her baddest bad-girl status! But that's okay–we'd vacation in the netherworld with Ms. Death anytime. ■ THE *WIZARD* STAFF

TOY BIZ BUYS MARVEL

It's official: Toy Biz owns Marvel Comics.

The toy manufacturer Toy Biz, which once was owned by Marvel Comics, assumed control of Marvel as of Oct. 1, 1998. The entire company is now known as Marvel Enterprises, Inc. While representatives from Toy Biz were unavailable for comment, it is speculated that the toy company wanted to own characters with licensing potential in TV, movies and toys.

The direct result of the deal was a number of Marvel Comics employees being laid off. Marvel editors let go included Joe Andreani (*Conan*), Mark Bernardo (*Heroes for Hire*, *Quicksilver*), Kelly Corvese (Marvel Kids), Jaye Gardner (*Alpha Flight*, *Silver Surfer*) and Glenn Greenberg (*X-Man*, *Nova*). Of the titles listed, *Conan*, *Heroes for Hire*, *Quicksilver* and *Alpha Flight* have been canceled. The others have shifted to other hands. ■ SCOTT A. AUBREY

Since the beginning of time they have protected the Earth from the agents of hell.

Prophecy of the SOUL SORCERER™

A new 32 page full-color monthly book on sale in May from

Distributed by Diamond Comic Distributors, Inc.
Visit the world of Arcane at
www.soulsorcerer.com
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AARDVARK-VANAHEIM
Cerebus #239 brings part eight of the 34-part "Going Home," storyline, continuing the march toward issue #300 in year 2004.

ABC STUDIOS
Bad Apples #2, a ***Double Impact Raw*** collected edition, a *Guillotine* and the *Double Impact Alive 2000* special editions all hit shelves in February.

ACCLAIM COMICS
In February, *Deadside* #1 with story by **Paul Jenkins** (*Inhumans*) and painted art by Ashley Wood spins off from *Shadowman* and acts as a lead-in to the Acclaim Entertainment *Shadowman* video game.

MONICA'S STORY

ALTERNATIVE COMICS
January's ***Monica's Story*** is a 32-page anonymously written comic investigating the love story behind the President Clinton/Monica Lewinsky scandal. Net proceeds will be donated to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund.

AWESOME-HYPERWERKS
Sizzlin' hot artist **Pat Lee** (*Darkminds*) will do a series of manga-esque covers for Awesome's *Re Gex*, *Youngblood*, *Fighting American* and *Avengelyne*.

BONGO COMICS
In homage to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Bart and Homer visit the Krusty Brand Fun Factory. But will they make it out alive? Find out in February's ***Simpsons Comics*** #41.

CATFISH COMICS
Sinnamon #12 goes for the gusto with two covers, one a full wraparound by Nick Poliwko, the other by longtime *Sinnamon* artist M. Gerald Delaney.

CHAOS! COMICS
February's *Lady Death* #14 marks the Lady's fifthanniversary and fans can enter a contest to win original art from Lady Death co-creator **Steven Hughes**.

VAMPIRELLA/ LADY DEATH

TOP COW INVADES GOTHAM IN DC X-OVERS

Top Cow Productions and DC Comics have finally lifted the veil surrounding their highly anticipated *Darkness/Batman* and *JLA/Witchblade* crossover books. *Darkness/Batman*, the 48-page one-shot scheduled for May release, will be written by the team of Jeph Loeb (*Superman For All Seasons*) and Scott Lobdell (*Wildcats*).

Loeb and Lobdell are joined by artists Marc Silvestri (*The Darkness*) and David Finch (*Ascension*) on *Darkness/Batman*. The story, according to Lobdell, will focus almost exclusively on the main characters. "Rather than go the standard team-up route where two heroes join forces against two villains from their respective titles—What are the odds?—we're doing a story where The Darkness and Batman are each other's adversary."

Mob hitman and Darkness-bearer Jackie Estacado lives in New York. But Loeb said, "For 'business reasons,' he has to go to Gotham City. Jackie may be a big man in New York, but in Gotham, that doesn't mean diddly. We really want to make Gotham City a very scary place, almost a character unto itself."

Speaking of characters unto themselves, a new Top Cow series for late 1999 to be written by Lobdell is slated to launch out of *Darkness/Batman*. But information about the series is still being kept under wraps. "Fans will be surprised to discover the long-lasting effects" is all Lobdell would say.

Meanwhile, May's *JLA/Witchblade*, written by Loeb, is looking like a murder mystery. Both Witchblade-wearer/New York police detective Sara Pezzini and the JLA's Martian Manhunter (as detective John Jones) will be working on the case. "And I couldn't tell a story with this lineup without Witchblade and Wonder Woman having a major throw-down," Loeb said. "It'll be fun." An artist has yet to be assigned for *JLA/Witchblade*. ■ **CHRIS HUTCHINS**

DARK GENESIS A new Top Cow series is slated to launch from *Darkness/Batman*.

MORE THAN MORTAL' GETS NEW IMAGE

More than Mortal is working its magic with a move to Image Comics. The mystical tale of Celtic mythology has used stunning art and color to generate fan buzz since its debut. With small-press success under its belt, the title and its publisher, Liar Comics, are moving up a class to Image, with a little help from an existing Image title.

Lady Pendragon provides the bridge for *MTM* with a two-part More than Mortal/Lady Pendragon crossover beginning in May. Following that, a new *More than Mortal* storyline will kick off in July under the Image banner. "And we've got a bunch of new stuff in the works for when we get to Image," Liar co-founder Matt Scott said. Scott's wife Sharon performs writing duties on *MTM* while Richard Isanove handles penciling chores. "Fans will see more titles coming from us, as well as more *More than Mortal*. It's going to be an exciting time." ■ **MATTHEW BRADY**

'INVISIBLES' KICKS OFF FINAL RUN

Grant Morrison to end Vertigo series in 2000

Writer Grant Morrison (*JLA*) knows the secrets of the universe. And he's letting comic readers in on 'em.

Volume Three of *The Invisibles*, the DC/Vertigo story of Morrison's band of "cool terrorists, sort of the James Bonds of the counter-culture," gets underway in February. The third and final act in the three-part *Invisibles* saga will launch with issue #12 and count backward to #1, set to hit just after the new millennium. "It seemed appropriate," Morrison said. "The book started six years ago leading up to a definite end. The end times and how to prevent them are what this book's all about."

The Invisibles have been fighting unseen, extra-dimensional invaders who are the puppet masters behind many earthly governments. And the bad guys are gearing up for their big push—using a solar eclipse to put an alien on the throne of England. Morrison promises a final resolution to the struggle and, of course, "the secrets of the universe—how and why it was made." ■ **JIM McLAUCHLIN**

KING E.T. *Invisibles Vol. 3* sees aliens trying to seize the English throne.

CHARLTON HEROES RESURFACE AT DC

Thanks to comics veteran Bob Layton, Captain Atom and Blue Beetle will get to see some old friends.

Layton, the former *Iron Man* plotter and inker, will write and ink a six-issue *Last American Warriors* (*L.A.W.*) DC Comics mini-series beginning in February. The series will focus on the former Charlton Publishing heroes—such as Atom and Beetle—that DC now owns rights to. Longtime DC artist Dick Giordano will pencil the book.

The heroes will fight Parashrama, the Hindu god of vengeance. "He thinks the warrior caste is evil and launches a mystical war against the Earth's military and superheroes," Layton said. The god banishes the JLA from the planet, and the L.A.W. heroes rise up to face him.

A revamped Nightshade, seldom-seen heroes such as Judo Master, and other Charlton heroes like the Question will get another chance. For Layton, it's a labor of love; way back in 1974, Layton worked on *Charlton Bullseye*, a fanzine dedicated to Charlton characters. "I've got memos on this dating back years," Layton said. "I could go on for years." ■ **NACHIE CASTRO**

SECOND STRINGERS (Clockwise from above left) Captain Atom, Blue Beetle and the Question take over when the JLA is abducted.

contest winners

LUCKY STIFFS

•Kevin Apgar of Dekalb, IL is a big winner! He snared a rare and valuable painted David Mack original art piece in *Wizard* #86's **"Get Into Kabuki's Mind!"** contest!

•Mario Ruiz of Jackson Heights, NY knows what the future holds: He won a ton of comics and even original art in the **"DC One Million!"** contest from *Wizard* #86!

• Sean McEvilly of Algonquin, IL became the biggest beefcake on his block by winning a framed "South Park" limited-edition lithograph in the **"South Park Trivia!"** contest from *Wizard's Toons* special.

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT

Battlebooks, **Bill Tucci**'s comics-meets-gaming hybrid, expands in February with Darkchylde and Vampirella.

DARK HORSE COMICS

Ready those lightsabers! *Star Wars: Episode One*, the Dark Horse adaptation of the first "Star Wars" prequel, hits in May.

ASH: FIRE AND CROSSFIRE

DC COMICS

Qaliban is a new DCU ongoing written by **John Ostrander** (*Martian Manhunter*) about a man who manipulates the quantum field so well that he becomes a magician. Look for it in March. Also in March, look for *The Weinbergs*, a six-issue mini-series about an orphaned superhero family traveling the DCU in a Winnebago. It's written by *Titans* **Devin Grayson**.

• WildStorm Productions

'Tis official: The new *Wildcats* ongoing by **Scott Lobdell** and Travis Charest is a bi-monthly book.

EVENT COMICS

February's *Ash: Fire and Crossfire* #2 continues the new Ash saga by writer **James Robinson** (*Starman*) and artists Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti (*Daredevil*).

IMAGE COMICS

• Avalon Studios

Following the successful *Stone* mini-series, February sees the launch of the *Stone* ongoing. The same creative team of Brian Haberlin and **Whilce Portacio** preside.

• Highbrow

Don't ya think it's time for the recently deceased Dragon to get back into his own body? Creator **Erik Larsen** sure thinks so, and that's the order of the day in February's *Savage Dragon* #58.

• Todd McFarlane Productions

Be sure to check out February's *The Crow* #1, an all-new full-color series written by Jon J. Muth with art by Jamie Tolagson. The first two issues re-tell Eric Draven's tragic tale, with later issues centering on why Draven was chosen as the Crow.

• TOP COW COMICS

February's *Fathom Collected Edition* is a 48-page whopper combining all three versions of *Fathom*.

LOBDELL HAS TOP COW, DC PROJECTS IN '99

The plate is full for Scott Lobdell these days. Just don't tell him it's overflowing: "I know it seems like a lot," the former *Uncanny X-Men* and current *Wildcats* writer said. "But I have a plan for it all. I won't be overwhelmed."

It's a good thing. Lobdell has a busy year ahead of him, sinking his teeth into a number of projects for Top Cow and DC's WildStorm imprint.

Lobdell starts by taking over writing duties on Top Cow's *The Darkness* with March's #23, where he plans to explore Darkness-bearer and Mafia hitman Jackie Estacado's dark past: "As evil as we think Jackie's actions are now, we'll see that before he turned 21, he did things that will come back to haunt him," Lobdell said.

It isn't the only Cow project lined up for Lobdell. He's also working on a creator-owned project he just can't talk about right now, for late 1999 release.

And Lobdell just started scripting *Divine Right* over creator Jim Lee's plots for WildStorm Productions. Lobdell's stamp of dialogue starts with January's #7, and he'll be staying until the series' end, currently slated to fall somewhere between #12 and #20.

By the time *Divine Right* wraps, Lobdell will be ready for *Mostly Wanted*, a six-issue WildStorm series about two women who "inadvertently overthrow the political structure of the entire universe." It should launch in August.

As if that weren't enough, there's the creator-owned four-issue WildStorm series titled *Ball and Chain*. "It's my first romantic comedy superhero story," Lobdell said. "A guy and a girl realize it's not working out, but when an asteroid crashes and irradiates them—giving them superpowers—they have to stay together to save the world."

With all these projects, can Lobdell crank out solid stories? He thinks so. "This is a great time for me," he said: "I know I haven't bitten off more than I can chew." ■ **CHRIS HUTCHINS**

LARSEN TAKES ON 'SAVAGE' SCHEDULE

In a move sure to give Erik Larsen crippling hand cramps, the writer/artist announced his *Savage Dragon* ongoing will go to a three-week schedule for issues #62-66, beginning this June. And that's not all.

In February, before the summer mayhem, Larsen will also offer 12 installments of a weekly *Savage Dragon* newspaper-style comic strip in *Comic Shop News*, a freebie newspaper available in many comic stores.

Why the strip? "Simply to get the word out on *Dragon*," Larsen said. "It's very dialogue-driven and more gag-oriented than what may be in an ordinary issue." As for the speedy schedule on the actual book, Larsen is blunt: "I'm anal. I thought it would be cool if *Savage Dragon* #100 shipped on the 10th anniversary of the first issue of the initial *Savage Dragon* mini-series. And speeding up the schedule is the only way I can make it happen." Anal? Nah. ■ **JAKE ROSSEN**

STRIP TEASE *Savage Dragon* will run comic-strip style in *CSN*.

BACHALO RETURNS TO VERTIGO ROOTS

Chris Bachalo is brewing something new in his post-X-Men career.

Bachalo, the acclaimed *Uncanny X-Men* artist of the past year, is going creator-owned at DC/Vertigo with partner Jeph Loeb (*The Coven*) and a three-issue *The Witching Hour* mini-series.

"It's a direction I'd been leaning in for a while," said Bachalo, who has done extensive Vertigo work on *Shade* and two Death mini-series. "And I love what Jeph has written in his Batman [*Long*] *Halloween* stuff. I just had to work with this guy."

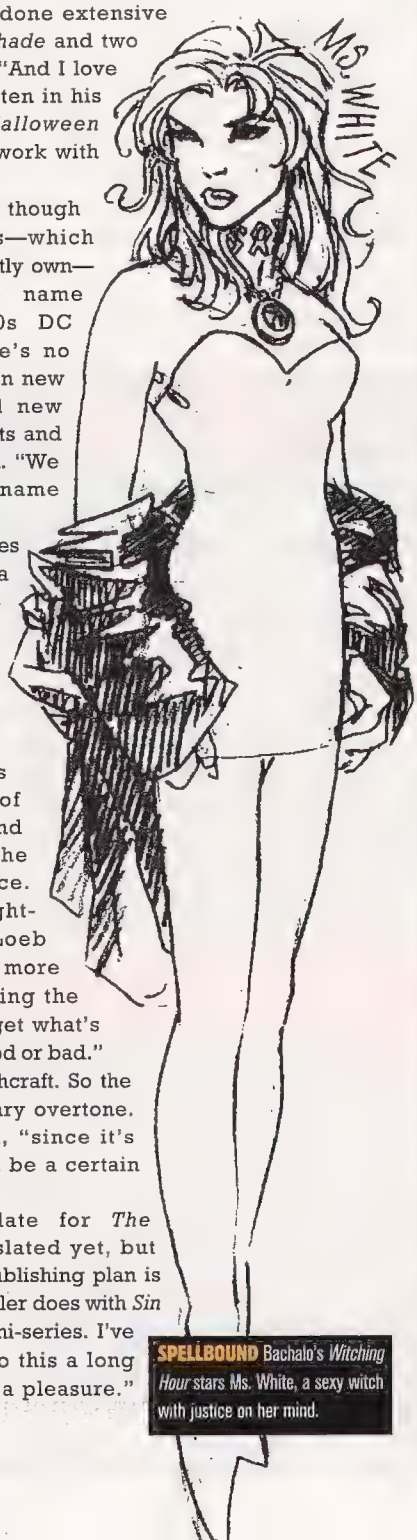
Loeb says even though this new series—which he and Bachalo jointly own—bears the same name as an early '70s DC horror title, there's no connection between new and old. "It's all new characters, concepts and designs," Loeb said. "We just license the name from DC."

The series focuses on Ms. White, a woman Loeb described as "a stunning, bright, funny witch in present-day New York. She gets involved in people's lives in matters of greed, jealousy and infidelity." And the focus is on justice. "It's not her fighting warlocks," Loeb continued. "She's more interested in tipping the scales so people get what's coming to them, good or bad."

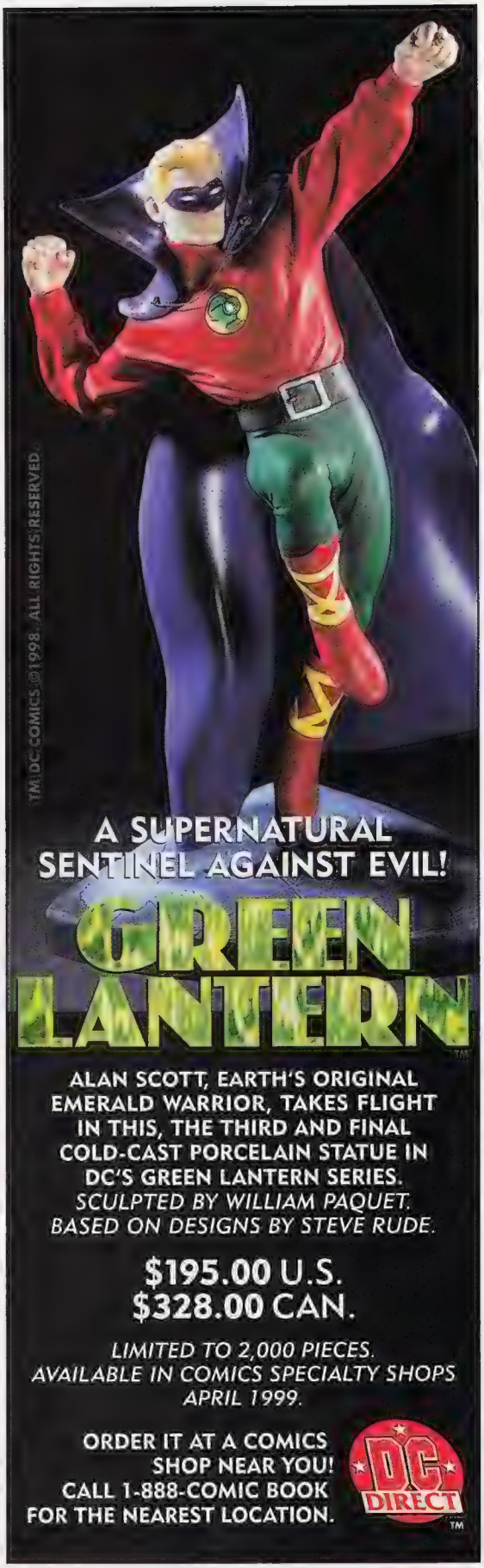
Still, this is witchcraft. So the plan calls for a scary overtone. "And," Loeb said, "since it's Vertigo, there will be a certain sexuality to it also."

No release date for *The Witching Hour* is slated yet, but Bachalo said the publishing plan is "like what Frank Miller does with *Sin City*, a series of mini-series. I've been waiting to do this a long time. It should be a pleasure."

■ JIM McLAUCHLIN



SPELLBOUND Bachalo's *Witching Hour* stars Ms. White, a sexy witch with justice on her mind.



#1 with the *Fathom Preview* and all-new sketchbook material from creator **Michael Turner**.

LONE STAR PRESS
The creative team of **Bill Willingham**, Mike Leeke and Bill Williams bring you *Pantheon* #5, where Daedalus goes to wreak some undersea havoc while President Clinton and Johnny Venture chat about The Supermero Problem.

MARVEL COMICS
Avengers Forever #4 in January features four variant covers, one by famed *Bone* cartoonist **Jeff Smith**!

AVENGERS FOREVER

ONI PRESS
Penn Jillette (of Penn & Teller fame) and Renee French bring the mature comedy *The Adventures Of Rheumy Peepers And Chunky Highlights* to readers in February. Also in February, *Oni Double Feature* #11 offers works from **Steve Seagle** (*Uncanny X-Men*) and Stan Sakai (*Usagi Yojimbo*).

OKTOMICA ENTERTAINMENT
The publisher ships two versions of ***Virtex*** #2 into the fray: a normal format and an Action Edition, including an action figure.

PENNY FARTHING PRESS
Captain Gravity kicks Nazi booty in *Captain Gravity* #3.

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT
Mark Crilley's ***Akiko*** goes bimonthly with January's #32 so Crilley can work on a line of illustrated *Akiko* novels for Bantam Books!

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS
Awkward is the amazing freshman-year real-life comic diary from **Ariel Schrag**. Look for it in February, with 56 pages and a $4.95 cover.

SLIGHTLY BENT ENTERTAINMENT
Slightly Bent Comics #2 heads to the shelves in February with the further comic adventures of Mel Cool, Mall Cop, Dude-Guy, Attorneys In Space and the guy who's gotten all the kids to "Stop and Think" –Danger Dad!

TOPPS COMICS
Yep, it's official: Topps Comics is "on hiatus." The publisher is letting its ***Xena*** and *X-Files* licenses lapse.

STRACZYNSKI TO WRITE SERIES FOR TOP COW

He's already tackled political intrigue and intergalactic combat. So J. Michael Straczynski's next endeavor will bring him back down to Earth. Illinois, to be specific.

Straczynski, the Emmy-winning creator of TV's "Babylon 5," is writing a creator-owned 24-issue mini-series titled *Rising Stars* at Top Cow Productions. *Stars* premieres in a March preview issue, with a regular series starting in June.

In the late 1960s, an extraterrestrial energy source struck the midwestern town of Pederson, Ill., which caused 113 children to be born with superpowers. *Rising Stars* tells the tale of those 113 as they grow and develop, showing how their powers affect the world.

Straczynski, a longtime comic lover who's actually written some *Star Trek* and *Teen Titans* issues for DC Comics, wanted to get away from traditional "hero vs. villain" fare, one of the reasons he chose a mid-American setting.

"The setting is essential because I want to explore what happens when the good guys and bad guys all *know* each other," he said. "They grew up together. There are no secret identities in the classic style."

And Straczynski has lofty goals for the series. "I wanted to write a book that would challenge books like *Watchmen* and *Kingdom Come*," Straczynski said. Sound ambitious? A few years ago, Straczynski wanted to challenge "Star Trek" as TV's sci-fi king with a little thing called "Babylon 5." "A lot of people laughed. Five years and three Emmys later, nobody's laughing anymore." ■ **NACHIE CASTRO**

THUMBING OFF

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

THUMBS UP

'INHUMANS': Paul Jenkins and Jae Lee have done what we thought was impossible: make us care about the Inhumans, a team long perceived as also-rans in the Marvel Universe. Jenkins' story and Lee's art have meshed beautifully to expose the human frailties of this superpowered race of beings.

X-MEN BOX SET: Toy Biz scores with its latest X-Men boxed Collector's Series, this time with the team that appeared in *Giant-Size X-Men* #1. Toy Biz might have produced other versions of these characters but this set's super-detail and ultra-poseability go above and beyond what any other set of X-Men action figures have done before.

'SUPERMAN FOR ALL SEASONS': This is the best set of Superman stories we've read in quite some time. By making the 60-year-old icon and his cast seem like real flesh and blood, this mini-series captures all the Man of Steel's magic and mythos without showing his "age." Makes us wish we could see this type of energy on the monthly Super-titles.

THUMBS DOWN

NEW 'PUNISHER': This new supernatural spin on Marvel's cold-blooded vigilante sounds absurd. Instead of waging a war on crime by gunning down murderers, now Punisher's caught in a war between the hordes of Heaven and Hell and gunning down demons? Sure, no one's denying *Punisher* could use a facelift–but this definitely ain't it.

'SPIDER-MAN: CHAPTER ONE': Intent on making a hipper version of the Web-slinger's origin, this series instead overexplains Spidey's beginnings and clutters the original tale's simplicity and impact. Instead of Spidey discovering point-blank it's his own fault that the burglar killed Uncle Ben, this new version convolutes the origin's pivotal moment with the burglar explaining it to Spidey! The origin wasn't broken the first time around.

TOP-NOTCH TALENT UNEMPLOYED: Memo to publishers: Wake up! Did you know top-notch talent such as Mike Wieringo, Leinil Francis Yu and Jim Calafiore are currently without monthly work? There should be no such thing as a poorly drawn book when you've got passionate pros like these champing at the bit for a ongoing series gig.

BATMAN CREATOR KANE PASSES AWAY

Bob Kane, the creator of DC Comics' Batman, collapsed in his Los Angeles home and died of natural causes on Nov. 3, 1998. He was 83.

A cartoonist from an early age, Kane introduced Batman to the world in *Detective Comics* #27 in May, 1939. Originally dubbed "Bat-Man," the grim vigilante was created when DC Comics editor Vincent Sullivan asked Kane to devise a new superhero to follow up Superman, who had debuted the previous year.

The Dark Knight quickly became a pop culture icon with a now 60-year legacy existing well beyond its comics beginnings. Batman has appeared in motion picture serials, a live-action TV show, cartoons, newspaper strips and big-budget movies.

Kane enjoyed success beyond Batman as well, creating such popular cartoon characters as Courageous Cat, Minute Mouse and Cool McCool. But, to many, his name will forever be linked to the Batman and the superhero genre. Kane is officially credited as the man who created Batman and all projects based on the character—including movies and cartoons—must carry that designation.

"Bob Kane is one of a handful of people who launched the comic book industry and who gave the world a group of characters so colorful and inventive that they continue to captivate every new generation," Jenette Kahn, DC Comics president and editor in chief said. "Bob will be greatly missed, but he has left a legacy that will keep his memory alive." ■ **MATTHEW SAUNDERS**

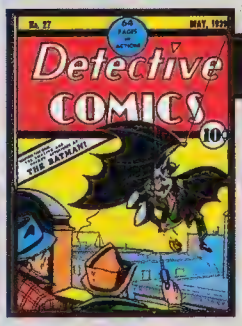
BOB KANE: 1915-1998

PHOTO BY PAUL SCHRADER

BOB KANE TIMELINE

OCT. 24, 1915–Born in New York, N.Y.

SEPTEMBER, 1936–First published comics work in *Wow What a Magazine!* #3



1938–Begins working at DC Comics

MAY, 1939–Batman debuts in *Detective Comics* #27

SPRING, 1940–*Batman* #1 debuts

1943–First movie serial, "Batman," released; "Batman and Robin" syndicated newspaper strip begins

1960–Syndicated animated TV series, "Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse," debuts (Kane created the duo)

JAN. 12, 1966–"Batman" live-action TV show debuts on ABC

1966–Retires from comics, draws last regular Batman story

SEPT. 10, 1966–Animated series "Cool McCool" debuts on NBC

SEPT. 14. 1968–First animated Batman series, "The Batman/Superman Hour," debuts on CBS

1989–Autobiography *Batman and Me* published

JUNE 23, 1989–First big-budget Batman movie, "Batman," released, Kane is a project consultant

NOV. 3, 1998–Dies of natural causes ■ **MS**

in memory of...

COLLEAGUES SAY GOODBYE

Several creators share their thoughts about Bob Kane and the enduring legacy of Batman.

"Bob Kane's Batman not only defined the costumed hero genre, but also fired the imaginations of the talented artists and writers who worked with him. Together, they created one of popular fiction's most dynamic icons. Bob's inspiration will light Gotham City forever." **–Paul Dini, writer/producer, "The Batman Adventures"**

"Bob and I saw this field differently. He viewed comics as entertainment and an extension of Hollywood movies, while I saw it as a literary field. For Bob, the dream came true! He invented comicdom's most theatrical character, Batman."**–Will Eisner, creator, The Spirit**

"The brilliance of Bob Kane's creations are their ability to withstand the test of time. While saddened that he's gone, I'm cheered that he and his family got to see his imagination in so many forms of entertainment and media."**–Jeph Loeb, writer, Batman: The Long Halloween**

"Bob was one of the founding fathers, one of the icons. We mourn his passing."**–Denny O'Neil, Batman group editor**

"I've lost a friend and we have all lost the gentleman most responsible for creating the most notable pop culture icon of the 20th century. I wish him godspeed."**–Adam West, actor/star of 1960s "Batman" TV series** ■ **MS**

THE 'KINGDOM' THAT DIDN'T COME

Artist Alex Ross gives you the keys to his 'Kingdom'

The "Kingdom Event," DC Comics' much-anticipated "prequel" to 1996's hit mini-series *Kingdom Come*, has finally arrived. But the project saw the light of day in a much different form than originally intended.

KC writer Mark Waid wrote December's seven "Kingdom" one-shots. But artist Alex Ross, who conceived and designed Kingdom's characters, was nowhere to be found. "The company chose to align themselves with someone else," said Ross, who originally committed to the "Kingdom" project then pulled out when it didn't proceed to his satisfaction. "I felt that as the initial creator—by that I mean I was the first guy to put anything down on paper—my ideas were being met with little or no respect."

It's a classic case of "creative differences," this time for real. "We just couldn't agree on a direction," was all Waid had to say on the matter.

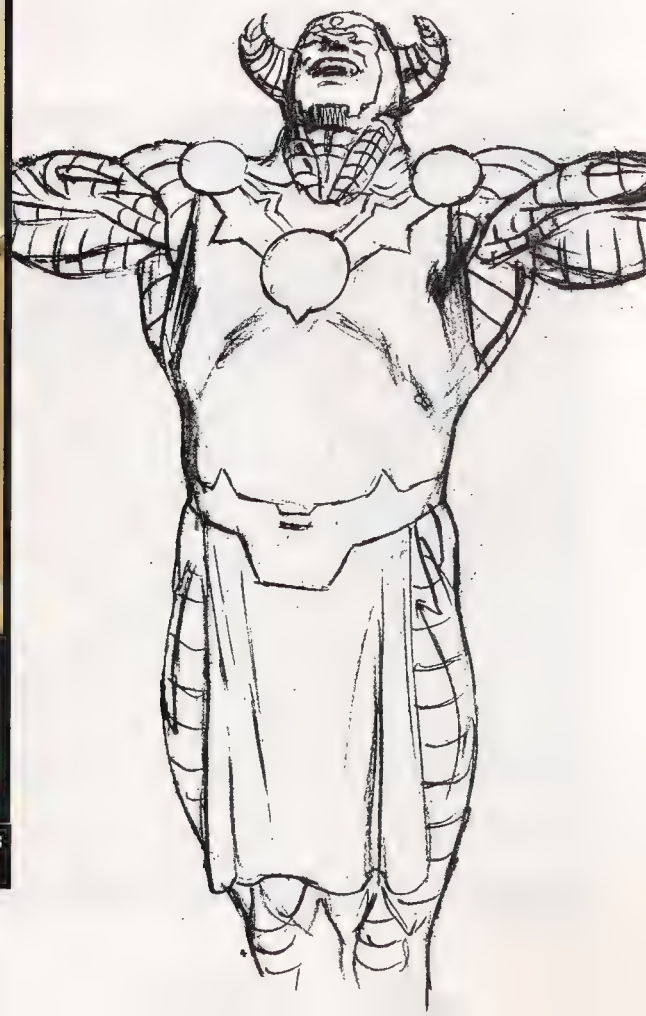
Still, Ross had prepared materials for an ongoing *Kingdom* monthly. Here's a look at what might have been different...if Ross' *Kingdom* would have come.

PROMO PIECE

Ross prepared this piece for an October, 1996 *Kingdom* meeting. His major players appear here. "What people enjoyed most about *Kingdom Come* was that the most iconic characters were central to the story," Ross said. And he definitely throws Captain Marvel ("The Thunder") in there. "To my mind, he's one of the most important characters DC has their hands on," Ross said. "More important than Flash or Green Lantern."

And Magog, *Kingdom Come*'s villain, lurking in the background of the piece? Ross intended him as a background player early on. "Despite the big image of him, I didn't even want him in the book for the first year. I wanted build-up. I wanted everyone to be wet and squirmy, wondering, 'When's he coming? When's he coming?'"

LOST ART Ross mocked up an ad for his Kingdom that never happened (above).



GOG

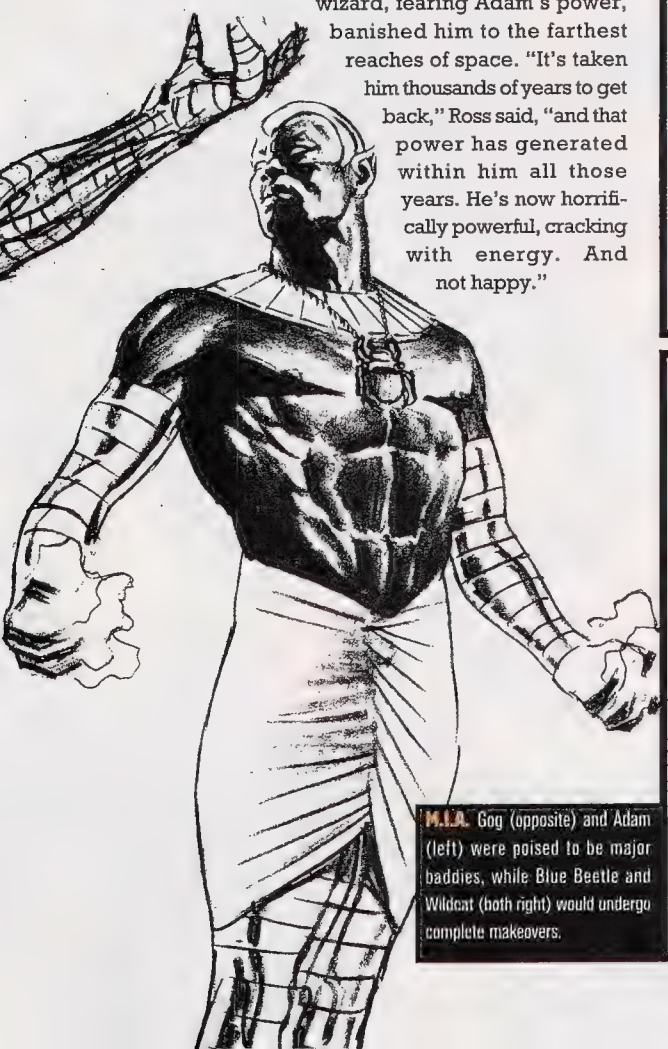
Before Magog, there needs to be a Gog to mentor him. "After he went through the twisted prism of my mind, he kind of came across looking Kirby-esque," Ross said. So Ross' notion was to tie him in with Jack Kirby's DC "Fourth World" concept. "Gog might be an unearthed survivor of the original Genesis/Apokolips planet," Ross said, referring to the world that split in two to set up the Fourth World conflict. As a survivor of that "double world," he'd be double-sized, twice as large as a normal man. His face, according to Ross, "would be stone, ashen. He'd look like a combination of Highfather and Darkseid," the main Fourth World characters.

WILDCAT

In Ross' *Kingdom*, Wildcat was an Egyptian cat god. And he'd start out young. "He'd be like a child-panther, maybe six or seven years old," Ross said, "a young kitten that needs to be looked after by a parent." Wildcat would find a parent in the form of Ted Grant, the boxer-turned-superhero who was DC's original Wildcat. "Grant would take him under his wing," Ross said. "He'd be fascinated by this young Wildcat. He'd look at him like a human version of what he's dressed as."

ADAM

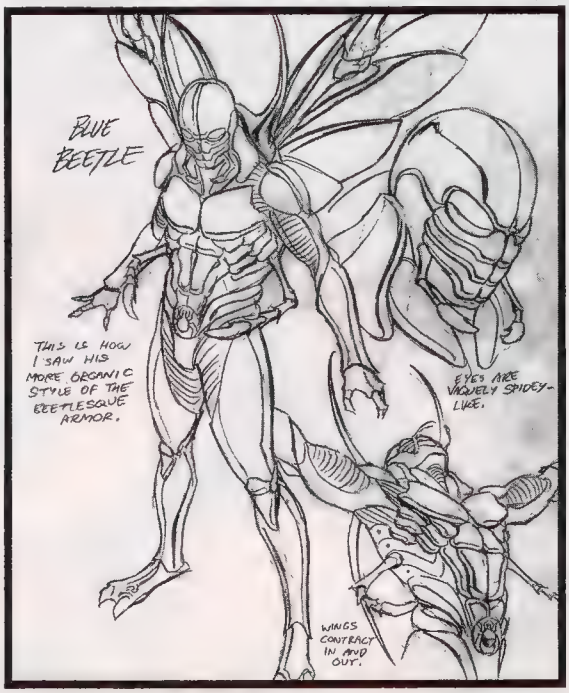
Adam was glimpsed for a mere two panels in *Kingdom Come*. But Ross planned him as a major, haunting presence in *Kingdom*. "Adam was intended as an ancient Egyptian slave with the power of Shazam," Ross said. But the Shazam wizard, fearing Adam's power, banished him to the farthest reaches of space. "It's taken him thousands of years to get back," Ross said, "and that power has generated within him all those years. He's now horrifically powerful, cracking with energy. And not happy."

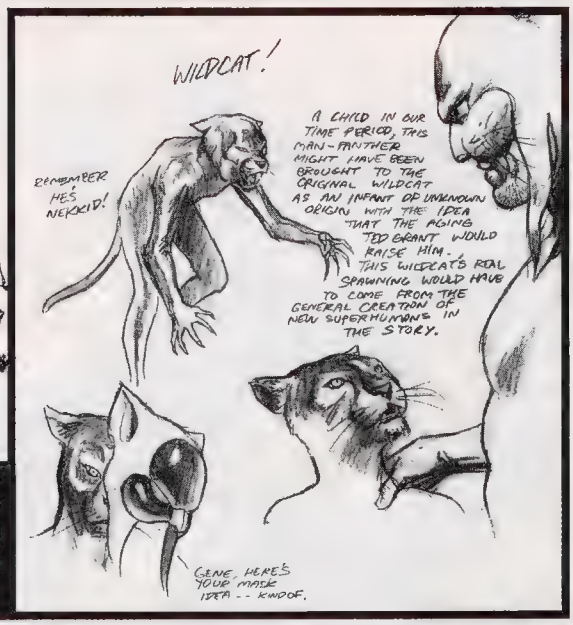


BLUE BEETLE

Ross' Blue Beetle is inspired by the Guyver, an armored manga character. And in *Kingdom*, he was going to take charge. "I wanted to make him much more an aggressive character," Ross said. "He was an ass-kicker for years, but they turned him into a joke in the '80s. I wanted to recast him in a gutsy role that the character hadn't seen in 30 years. I figured if I could have incorporated that, he could be more hip and happening today."

Even though Ross has completely left the "Kingdom" and wants to distance himself from its current form, he realizes life goes on. "*Kingdom Come* is best left as it is," he concludes. "It was written as the last great story of a superhero universe. I now think *Kingdom Come* is greatest in a finite form. And if I feel that way, maybe it's better I move on." ■ JIM McLAUCHLIN





M.I.A. Gog (opposite) and Adam (left) were poised to be major baddies, while Blue Beetle and Wildcat (both right) would undergo complete makeovers.

LAST MAN STANDING

comic battles you never thought you'd see

JUGGERNAUT VS. LOBO

THE COMBATANTS

TALE OF THE TAPE

6'10"	HEIGHT	6'4"
900 lbs	WEIGHT	210 lbs
82"	REACH	76"
Berkeley, Calif.	HOMETOWN	Czarnia
Money	MOTIVE	Money
Cyttorak	POWER SOURCE	Beer

The bullying stepbrother of Professor Charles Xavier, Cain Marko sought shelter from artillery fire in a cave while on a military tour of duty during wartime. Inadvertently stumbling across the mystical gem of Cyttorak, Marko was endowed with superhuman strength, invulnerability and next to no human weaknesses—making him a virtually unstoppable Juggernaut!

A native of the planet Czarnia, the bloodthirsty Lobo decided he wanted to be unique and slaughtered every other of his kind. Now, as the last of his species, Lobo uses his race's naturally superhuman strength, senses and invulnerability as the most feared mercenary/bounty hunter in the galaxy!

tha winnah... Not wasting time with such crap as advanced planning and strategy, Lobo dive-bombs the Juggernaut with his flying bike and scores the first blows—all cheap shots (kidney punches, nut-shots, kicks to the knee, etc.). Barely feeling what little made it past his personal force field, the Juggernaut counters with a slower backhand Lobo easily avoids but does manage to bring down a building near them. Lobo, avoiding the Juggernaut's slower blows, presses the attack, but to no avail: Nothing can hurt the Juggernaut.

The battle having raged on for hours, and miles of battleground laid to waste, Lobo steps up his dirty fighting style and begins to use anything and everything to drop on, run-through, or decapitate his magically fueled foe. But as Lobo begins to tire in his attempts to slow his opponent, he begins to realize one thing: Nothing can stop the Juggernaut.

With days of battle behind him and the sinking feeling that his foe is far more powerful than he imagined, the fatigued Czarnian falls prey to more and more of the Juggernaut's Superman-level blows as—moments before the Czarnians become extinct as a species—he learns: No one can beat the Juggernaut. (W)

this month's battle drawn by JIM CALAFIORE and PETER PALMIOTTI

STAR SEARCH

'Wizard' scouts the creative pool for tomorrow's superstars

COUNTDOWN TO WIZARD 2000

By Scott A. Aubrey

Makin' it big in comics ain't easy. No, we're not sayin' everyone ends up flipping burgers at Jack-in-the-Box or pumping gas at Exxon. But rising to the top of the comic book crop is a tough task. Even tougher is figuring out just who the next superstars will be. Well, we can help ya there. Each year the *Wizard* Staff assembles a list of comic pros on the verge of greatness. The up-and-comers. The hot ones. Wonder why comic fans shell out hard-earned green for back-issues of guys such as Michael Turner and J. Scott Campbell? 'Cause they're great, sure, but get this—they were both on our past lists.

Well, here are six *more* guys whose time has come. They're currently just under the radar, but soon their comics'll be on every fanboy's want list. So take notes and, if you're lucky, you can get these guys' work at cover price, instead of paying through the nose later.

RANDY GREEN

Forget that "road less traveled" hooey! *Witchblade* penciler Randy Green took the road more traveled—specifically, a prosperous advertising career—but still managed to realize his ambition as a comics penciler. "The advertising thing came really easy," says Green. "I was getting advancements and promotions without really trying, so I had to make sure comics was something I was going to make money at before I just quit and went on a wild goose chase."

No chance of that. After cutting his teeth with various gigs—WildStorm's *Sigma* #2 and *Sword of Damocles* #1-#2, Crusade's *Shi* #9, and *Onslaught: Epilogue*, *Cable* #42-#46 and a Black Widow tale in *Journey Into Mystery* #517-#519 for Marvel—the 35-year-old has moved on to...well, greener pastures. After sharing penciling chores on a handful of Top Cow's *Ascension* and *Witchblade* issues, Green has claimed the latter title as his full-time job; his first complete issue was #26.

Nothing else could've made the North Carolina resident happier. "I've been telling people for years what I really want to do are stories that have kind of a soap opera aspect to them. I want to do stuff like the '70s Spider-Man where you were more interested in what happened with Peter Parker than with who Spider-Man was fighting. *Witchblade*'s got a lot of that."

Green hopes things stay that way, as he's not planning on leaving anytime soon. "I could see staying on *Witchblade* indefinitely. It's not something I'm going to get real bored with real fast. I seem to have found my little corner of the world."

That corner comes with a history. Fan-favorite Michael Turner once resided on *Witchblade*, and that's enough to make any replacement shake in his boots. Or is it? "I don't really even think about it," Green admits. "Two years ago it might have been overwhelming, thinking, 'Oh, I'm scared,' but I'm a little bit too old to be psyched out these days. And I've got a 2-year-old. If you can live with a 2-year-old, you can handle the pressure."

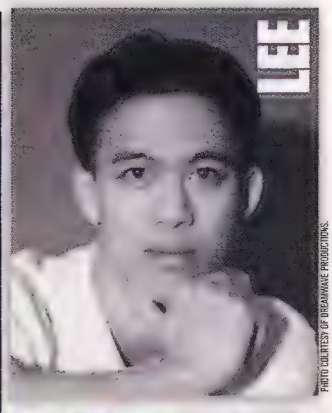
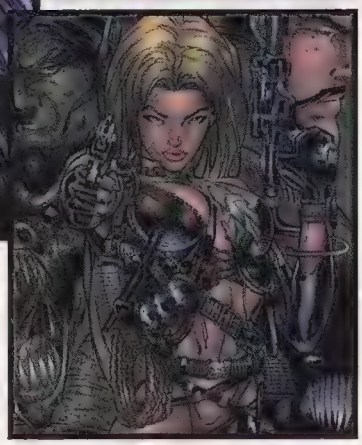


PHOTO COURTESY OF DREAMWAVE PRODUCTIONS.



MANGA MAN Lee first took aim on *Wynonna Earp* (right) before building buzz on *Darkminds* (above).

PHOTO COURTESY OF RANDY GREEN.

WITCH DOCTOR After his *Cable* billing (below right) Green has big shoes (and a big gauntlet) to fill on Witchblade (left).

PAT LEE

Pat Lee doesn't believe in settling.

"When you want something in life and you're stuck with something you don't want, why do it?" he asks. "Why not go all the way and just focus on what your dream job is?" Lee did. Now he's the 23-year-old co-owner of his own company, the manga-influenced Dreamwave Productions, and penciler and creator of the label's first effort, *Darkminds*, published by Image Comics.

It wasn't always that way. Lee worked his way up the comics ladder, starting about four years ago with Extreme's *Prophet* #9, a *Bloodpool* mini-series, and the first two issues of that title's ongoing run, and handled occasional penciling chores on WildStorm's *WetWorks*, *WildC.A.T.s* and *Wynonna Earp*. With much of his freelance work, Lee found himself suppressing his manga style—with the notable exception of *Bloodpool*. Because of its distinct feel, Lee tags that work as the most noticeable of his freelance career. "I was taking a big risk when I was doing it. I knew that, but I felt if it sparked up attention in comics, it would help the market slightly."

REMAKING HAVOK Raney's "altered" Marvel Universe in *Mutant X* will have fans thinking the world of him.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TOM RANEY.

Boosting a sagging market by offering something different—American-created manga—is part of Lee's ongoing mission at Dreamwave. Of course, the Ontario resident's motives aren't completely altruistic: He also enjoys the kind of control having his own company provides. "One of the biggest problems when I was a freelance artist was I wasn't able to sit down with my computer color separator and say, 'I would like to see it like this' or 'This is how I see it.' Every penciler is a director, and the way they see things, other people don't see it that way. When it's being mishandled, it totally destroys your view. That's why the first couple of issues of *Darkminds* came out so well, because I was able to direct this entire book and was able to have full control."

Next on director Lee's schedule is a possible book for the Marvel Knights line and a fantasy-based follow-up to *Darkminds*, tentatively set to hit stands in March. Although Lee's willing to reveal that vampires play a central role in the follow-up, he's mum about further details—even the title. But as owner of his own little part of the industry, that's his prerogative.

"This is where I plan on staying," he says happily. "The style, the feel—I know I've landed somewhere I belong."

TOM RANEY

Tom Raney is his own worst critic.

"I usually can't stand what I've done by the time I hand it in," admits Raney, penciler on Marvel's *Mutant X*. "I just see all the problems with my stuff. I'm constantly trying to fix all the things that I know I'm doing wrong. So when I look at the pages, that's all I'm seeing. I'm not seeing what the fans are reacting to."

That kind of harsh outlook might be expected from someone still establishing himself in the industry—but that somebody isn't Raney. He's gotten his fair share of work since starting in comics about eight years ago: DC's *Forgotten Realms* #17 and *Forgotten Realms Annual* #1, *Batman: Shadow of the Bat Annual* #2, Marvel's *Uncanny X-Men* #291-#293, and a host of other projects. But WildStorm's *StormWatch* #37-#50 is where he really made his mark. Fans still ask him to sign those issues at conventions. Now, Raney, 32, hopes for the same reaction to *Mutant X*, writer Howard Mackie's look at a twisted, alternate version of the Marvel Universe.

"It can't get cooler," Raney says of the opportunity to redesign some of Marvel's most-loved characters. He's already gotten a crack at Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four and, of course, the X-Men. "Howard gives me some ideas and I just go from there. For the book's initial designs, I was given a basic idea where the characters would go, and I made them a little darker than they had indicated, and that kind of helped spark the direction the book's going in."

Raney seems to have an affinity for darker, stranger characters. "My

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEX MALEEV.

MOVIE MAN In between working on *The Crow* and *Batman*, Maleev works in films as a storyboard artist.

favorites to draw are probably The Fallen and The Brute." (That's *Mutant X*'s versions of Angel and Beast.) "They're a little more whacked out," explains Raney. "The costumes are fun to draw. They're challenging too. Howard's challenging me a lot, asking me to draw stuff that requires a lot of thought, a lot of work, which is good."

So good, in fact, that Raney's criticism has become a little less biting. *Mutant X* is clearly his favorite work. "Each issue I think I've gotten a little better," he says, "and with issue #5, I actually still like pages I've handed in." And with fans snatching up copies of the book as fast as Marvel can print 'em, consumers must like it, too.

ALEX MALEEV

Alex Maleev was born Bulgarian, but America's where he feels at home. "I never had any doubts," says Maleev, whose art graces the first four issues of "No Man's Land," the mammoth storyline running through DC's Batman titles in '99. "The moment I saw the New York skyline, I said 'This is it. Thank you, God.'"

What inspired his mid-'90s transatlantic move? In a word: money. "In Bulgaria, I did etchings, but when the Eastern Bloc collapsed, the economies of all the countries around there were really bad. So people didn't have a lot of money to buy etchings. They wanted to buy bread." Maleev, then in his early 20s, opted to emigrate and, following a short stay at the Joe Kubert School of Graphic Art and Design, secured comics work after only a few days.

He penciled a few issues of Valiant's *Magic: The Gathering* and then two Crow mini-series for Kitchen Sink Press—*Dead Time* and *Flesh & Blood*. And now there's "No Man's Land," a project which he seems quite pleased with. "My style suits what they're trying to do with this storyline because it's realistic. The Batman pages, they look like photographs. It's a very sad and eerie story. Gotham is destroyed—I can't go with cartoons there. What I'm doing right now is helping them a lot."

It's also helping his plans for success, of which comics are only half the story. As a movie storyboard artist—the guy who sketches a director's intended scene prior to filming—the 27-year-old worked on last year's "Great Expectations" and the upcoming Denzel Washington action flick, "The Bone Collector." He enjoys the excitement of film, but prefers the freedom his other medium provides. "Comic books I have total control over. I don't write them and sometimes I have inkers, but other than that I just draw whatever I want to draw. With the movies, I've got to draw exactly what the director wants. It's a different kind of job...but it pays better."

Maleev enjoys both fields, comics and movies. But is he worried about any negative repercussions from his moonlighting? Not a chance. "I can't complain. I'm getting work from everywhere I want."

STEVE FIRCHOW

Steve Firchow is on the first rung of the ladder. Again.

Although the illustrator's introduction to comic books came four years ago as a colorist, the *More Than Mortal* creator's now reinvented himself as a penciler—and found the transition not an easy one to make.

"It's tough, it's really tough," says Firchow, penciler on the fantasy-based *Mortal*. "For one thing I had sort of established a pretty good reputation as a colorist and I kind of threw all that out the window and had to start over again. Y'know, starting at the bottom, and gradually, slowly working my way back up. But I'm seeing continuous improvement. I'm hoping that will continue and at some point I will be really competitive."

The improvement Firchow speaks of can be seen in *More Than Mortal*, the premier title of Liar Comics, a small California publisher. Not that small is a bad thing. "I like the fact that the level of politics is almost zero. I've worked with bigger studios and as much as I enjoyed that, there was a lot more politics involved."

Wherever he's worked, the 32-year-old Californian has been pleased with his comics work. Starting at WildStorm, Firchow supplied color guides for *StormWatch* #25, stayed with the title for a year, and then generated color guides for Top Cow's *Ripclaw* mini-series. Color guides are simply photocopies of penciled and inked pages which have been colored by hand, providing a "blueprint" for when the actual coloring is done on computer. Later, still with Top Cow, Firchow dabbled with the digital end himself and cranked out mucho work, including eight issues of *Cyberforce* and the first half-dozen of *The Darkness*.

He's also colored the initial issues of *More Than Mortal*, but will give up that duty when the bimonthly title begins shipping every five weeks next year as part of Image Comics. His disappointment about giving up coloring is clear, but transition is a part of life. "I'm estimating at this point that I'm only about halfway through with *More Than Mortal*," he predicts. "But, y'know, everything changes. And at heart, I'm an illustrator, and there will probably come a point when I'll want to go back to that and incorporate into my illustration what I've learned doing comics."

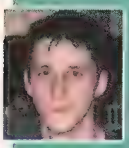
That should expand his base of fans from comics to the mainstream, helping to grow the comics medium—a winning strategy all-around.

PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE FIRCHOW.

'MORTAL' MAN Firchow gained a rep as the colorist for *The Darkness* (far left) before working his penciling magic on *More than Mortal* (left).

PROGRESS REPORT

Checking in with last year's hot ones



Ed McGuinness

After an eclectic year–a Fighting American mini-series, fill-ins on *Incredible Hulk* and *Cable*–Ed McGuinness is finally ready to tackle his first ongoing monthly since leaving *Deadpool* in late 1997. Committed to a year of pencils on WildStorm's upcoming *Mr. Majestic*, McGuinness is enjoying the challenge of the hero's larger-than-life adventures: "I'm trying to draw things that even Hollywood can't afford to do."

John Cassaday

John Cassaday has decided to downplay his participation on Homage's *Desperadoes* and instead is gearing up for next year's *Planetary* with writer Warren Ellis. The focus is on three characters uncovering the superhero history of the WildStorm Universe. "It's kind of a cross between *Astro City* and 'The X-Files,' that's the Hollywood pitch. We're building a bit of a bible for the WildStorm Universe past."

Leonardo Manco

Sad to see Marvel's *Werewolf by Night* canceled, Leonardo Manco's spirits have been buoyed by *Blaze of Glory: The Last Ride of the Western Heroes*, a two-issue mini-series reteaming Marvel's classic western heroes. Manco is revamping the Rawhide Kid and company–but using the unlikeliest of inspirations: Mad Max. "He was the first hero I saw in a movie. When I saw it, I said, 'I want to be like him.'"

José Ladrónn

With more than a year of *Cable* behind him, José Ladrónn can see how his pencils have improved. "In the first issues I was still adapting my work to the writer, but now I feel better about my art." He says he also feels good about an upcoming two-part *Legends of the DC Universe* tale that takes Superman to Transilvane, the horror planet featured in DC's old *Jimmy Olsen* series.

Leinil Francis Yu

Leinil Francis Yu's future is uncertain. Although contracted to Marvel, he's no longer penciling *Wolverine* and doesn't know what his next ongoing assignment will be–although he's managed to find something to fill his days: three issues of *Uncanny X-Men* (#364, #366 and #367). "It's a lot of work! You've got eight people instead of one to draw. But the excitement is helping me cope with the pages."

Salvador Larroca

A year ago, Salvador Larroca feared he'd be shunned by *Fantastic Four* fans because of the penciling shoes he had to fill–those of Alan Davis. But now he's in a groove and enjoying his company on the book, specifically that of writer Chris Claremont. "It's strange because I was a fan of his when I was a child. It's great, it's always a surprise hearing his point of view."

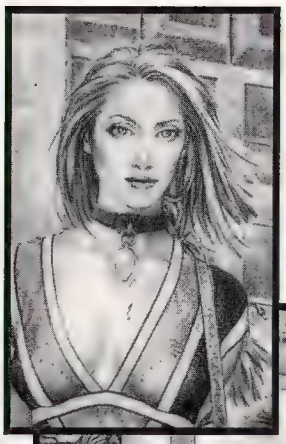
David Finch

Creator David Finch burned out last summer, especially when it comes to art. That's why he says he'll maintain only his writing duties on *Ascension*, his creator-owned Top Cow title. The rest of Finch's time will be filled with painting and penciling the occasional mini-series, the first of which remains in development. "It takes a lot to do a monthly book. I'm really sick of the hours and I'm starting to wonder if I really have the dedication."

Batt

Batt's future looks bright. He's lined up inking gigs on a Magneto mini-series and a Cable/Wolverine one-shot. And starting with issue #370, he's the regular inker on *Uncanny X-Men*. "I'm feeling really at home in Marvel's X-office. They've treated me well to this point." ■ SA

YU PHOTO BY HOLLY STERN; FINCH AND BATT PHOTOS BY JIM McHUGH. ALL OTHER PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE RESPECTIVE ARTISTS



JAY ANACLETO

Jay Anacleto is a dentist.

"A joke that was going around with me and my classmates was that I learned to draw while sleeping through lectures in dental class," explains Anacleto, penciler on Image Comics' upcoming *Aria*. "Probably the detail [in the artwork] came out because you really had to be good with your fingers, especially doing root canals and things like that."

SMILES, EVERYONE! Anacleto gave up dentistry for the detailed pencil art of *Aria*.

So why did the 29-year-old Filipino give up bicuspids for comics? No big secret. He just likes to draw. And man, can he ever draw. His detailed, photo-realistic style sure caught the eye of Brian Haberlin and Whilce Portacio of Avalon Studios, who tagged Anacleto as penciler for *Aria*, in stores now. "Brian liked my pencils so much, he's coloring directly from them. We're bypassing the inking," Anacleto explains, chuckling. "I guess he can't find an inker that can get those little teeny lines."

PHOTO COURTESY OF AVALON COMICS

Foregoing an inker might not be the norm for comics, but it seems to fit in this instance. And Anacleto didn't develop his skills in traditional comic book fashion either. "I got interested in drawing by looking at poster art illustrations and photo-realistic artwork, not comic books *per se*. I also love reading all those magazines—*GQ*, stuff like that. Since those are photos, I tried to copy them the best I could. I got used to that style of drawing before I got to drawing line art."

Nonetheless, his first published work was line art: He inked half of *Aster* #4 for Entity Comics in 1995; then came more fill-in inks for Entity and cover pencils for their *Shaiana* #1. But penciler Jae Lee, while in the Philippines on a promotional tour, advised Anacleto to stick with the realism. "It's hard to do, but he said it's better for me because it's an original type of artwork that's really different from what other pencilers and inkers are doing. So after I tried this artwork, I really liked it, especially the shading. Now, I find line art kind of bland, boring."

His photo-realistic work doesn't allow the chance for boredom. If anything, Anacleto is a bit apprehensive. "One of my biggest worries is that people keep referring to me as this guy that draws photo-quality drawings," he explains. "I just hope I don't disappoint."

Massachusetts-based freelance writer Scott A. Aubrey might be photo-realistic, but he never disappoints.

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WRITER
KELLY
WRITER
LOBDELL
WRITER
SIMONSON
EDITOR
HARRA
WRITER
SEAGLE
WRITER
WAID
DITOR
OWERS

DANGER ROOM

Why has writing the X-Men—one of the most coveted jobs in comics—turned into a frustrating, unrewarding experience for many writers?

By James Busbee

If you think fighting the X-Men is tough, try writing them.

Through the years, the X-Men have built a reputation for complex storylines, casts of thousands, and an epic scope—precisely the sorts of creative issues that can tax even the most talented writers. Combine that with the fact that the X-Men reign as the hottest property at Marvel and you have a situation where both writers and editors on *X-Men* and *Uncanny X-Men* toil under a white-hot glare of scrutiny. The pressure makes for a working experience more intense than any other in the industry.

"It's Marvel's biggest franchise, and there're levels of pressure from all parts of Marvel," says former *X-Men* writer Joe Kelly. "From the president on down, all these people are paying attention to that book and how it's done. So if you believe that it's a marker for the industry in general, there's a lot of pressure to do a good job."

ALL PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHIRALDI EXCEPT HARRAS PHOTO BY CRAIG BLANKENHORN

Writing the X-Men is one of the industry's plum assignments. But this past October, Kelly and *Uncanny* writer Steve Seagle, citing creative differences with the X-Men editorial team, abruptly quit their books. Kelly and Seagle are the latest in a line of writers to level the same complaints against their editors. The editor's role in the process is a vital one, says Bob Harras, former X-editor and current Marvel Editor-in-Chief. "As the editor, everyone in the company views you as responsible for your books," says Harras. "You're responsible for the writers, the artists, the characters, what goes into the stories, the sales and everything else. An editor's job is to shield the writers from those other concerns."

The truth is that while the battles on the printed page are more fun to watch, the behind-the-scenes disputes between writers and editors have far more of an impact on everyone's favorite mutants than Magneto ever will.

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORIES

One of the major problems, according to X-Men writers, is that editors aren't just doing their own jobs, they're also horning in on the writers' territory.

"I don't see where 'editorial driven' is a great sin," says Harras, who defines his X-Men role as an overseer, allowing current X-editor Mark Powers to handle the hands-on duties. "It's inevitable that writers will come and go. [The editors] have to make sure the characters remain good for the readers today, for readers months down the line and for readers years down the line."

Kelly understands the editors' role in the process, but wishes the process itself was made clear at the start. "If somebody told me from Day One, 'We're going to work out the story and hand it to you, and you just plot it and dialogue it,' I'd have no problem with that, because it's very up-front," Kelly says. "When that evolves over time, it becomes frustrating."

Kelly and Seagle's yearlong X-perience ended in a remarkably similar fashion to that of their predecessors. Chris Claremont, who guided the book from bimonthly curiosity to world-famous franchise, quit the book after 17 years. Scott Lobdell, Claremont's successor, left after five. Fabian Nicieza quit after three. Mark Waid lasted only six months. All departed the title discouraged and unfulfilled. What's going on here?

"You're not really writing the books *per se*, you are caretaking the books," Nicieza says. "You are basically being given a few pieces of a puzzle, and then you're being asked to put the pieces on the board. Other people have other pieces. You don't even know what the final puzzle is going to look like, but you've got to find the right ways to make them fit. That's an incredibly difficult thing to do."

Editing the most popular comic in North America is no picnic, either. "Editing the X-Men is like editing one giant book with a cast of hundreds, written by a handful of individuals with their own ideas and viewpoints," says current X-editor Mark Powers. "It's up to someone like me to pull it all together, keep the process moving, and get the book out on time. Sometimes we're the producer, sometimes the director, but always the coordinator."

Fair enough—each side has a difficult job. Now the question is: How do you navigate a flagship when everyone has a hand on the wheel?

DAYS OF X-MEN PAST

In the early days of Claremont's X-Men, no one cared enough about the book to question its direction. The creative process then was, as Claremont recalls, "freewheeling": "There were no site-specific editors. You didn't have an 'X-Men' department. It was a matter of sitting down and saying, 'This is my idea, anybody got a problem with it?' and you'd go with it. Half the time, the editor's first inkling of what was going on was when they saw the script, the scripted pencils or the finished book."

Claremont excelled in such an atmosphere, and *X-Men* spawned dozens of series, mini-series and specials—a process which ironically led directly to Claremont's own departure. "Just managing the coordination of the various storylines and issues is a tremendously taxing job, which unfortunately requires, annoying as it is, a more hands-on approach from the editor," Claremont says. "I got to the point where I was chafing [under editors]. I was being called to task on elements of the storyline which I had created, but which were no longer under my control."

Harras, then the editor of the X-line, became the guiding force behind the book. Lobdell, who wrote *Uncanny*, says he initially worked well under Harras' direction, but once Harras ascended to the post of Marvel editor in chief, Lobdell believes the working environment around the X-Men suffered drastically. "It disintegrated when Bob was unable to handle the X-Men books, because his job became riding shotgun over the entire company," Lobdell says. "It became impossible to get him to focus on the total [X-Men] process."

CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG! Waid, Kelly and Claremont (bottom row) cite creative handcuffing due to editorial control. Editors Harras and Powers (top row) stress it's their responsibility to steer characters in the right direction.

X-TREME PROCESS

That "total process" remains murky, even to those who work within it. The X-Men books are, in theory, put together the standard "Marvel Way": The writer devises a plot, the penciler works off the plot, and the writer creates a script off the finished pencils. Writers and editors work out plots—again, in theory—at "summit meetings" that concern the direction of all the titles in the line. The frustration for writers arises from the fact that there is "strong editorial input," as Kelly puts it, from both Powers and Harras at every single stage in the process, to the point of changing plots in mid-script, dropping subplots (see "X-Orcised" sidebar), and re-dialoguing pages that are already scripted.

"I believe I rewrote [*Uncanny* #325] six times completely from scratch because I couldn't bring myself to follow through on the [editorial] edict, which was to have Storm kill Marrow," Lobdell recalls. "It was only [on] the sixth time that I came up with the version that I was morally okay with, and even then to this day I feel badly having written the story." (Storm ripped out Marrow's heart; conveniently, she had two.)

Nicieza goes a step further: "In my entire run on *X-Men*, I'm happy with maybe three or four issues total—*X-Men* #25 [when Magneto yanked

the adamantium out of Wolverine], *X-Men* #33 [a Sabretooth/Gambit story], and *X-Men* #30, the [Cyclops/Phoenix] wedding issue," he says.

Kelly and Seagle had heard the stories about the X-editors, but initially found no problems. "Joe and I, along with Mark Powers, proceeded to produce two detailed, yearlong plans for the two X-books which were filled with interesting stories, sweeping long-range character arcs, shorter stories, one summer 'big event' crossover, and enough marketing spikes to make any retailer happy without irritating the fans," Seagle recalls. "I was led to believe this plan had been accepted, and proceeded to start laying in the threads of these stories in the issues I was writing. Then all four tires blew out from under our wagonload of good stuff."

Kelly and Seagle planned to divide the two books by giving each a separate lineup, but the editors preferred to keep the books tightly linked. "So we had to keep sharing characters, and then [there were mistakes like], 'How come Marrow's in New Jersey and Wisconsin at the same time?' Oops," Kelly says.

The revamped lineup (recently introduced in *X-Men* #80), made up almost entirely of popular characters such as Wolverine and a suddenly back-from-exile Gambit, also raised some eyebrows. "You never know what it is [that dictates lineup changes], but Bob was answering to other people and this was a chaotic time at Marvel," Seagle says. "Certainly the redirected lineup—which neither Joe nor I were too happy about—I don't think that came directly from editorial. I think that came from outside forces, whatever they may be—[Marvel's] marketing or people above Bob, or who knows what."

Harras disputes that line of thinking. "There seems to be a perception that there's this evil corporation of Marvel dictating changes and so on, but that's not reality," Harras says. "It's just that everyone is watching you, inside and outside the company. It's a responsibility. Holding the X-Men is like holding a baby. And that baby must be taken care of."

"We've never had a guy above us come [and] say, 'You've got to have Wolverine in here because he sells more,'" Powers insists. Instead, he says, look to the other end of the comics equation. "As trite as it may sound, the fans are the real bosses," Powers says. He notes that fans' letters led to the return of Gambit and the inclusion of the former *Excalibur* members in the lineup.

"It really started to get troubling when the one character Joe and I both wanted in the book, which was Phoenix, [was something] we really fought for and we were basically told, 'No,'" Seagle says. "It seems to me that if you have two writers who are both very committed to a project, and both have at least one thing they agree on, that there would be room for that, and there really wasn't."

"Phoenix was written out of the book in *X-Men* #71," Powers says. "We used her in *Uncanny* #356-#357, but our feeling was, 'Why write a character out in one issue and bring her back a couple of months later?' We made something of a big deal having Scott and Jean leave Salem Center, so we felt it best to keep them out until they could be brought back at some future, dramatic point."

Because of the writers' complaints, it's easy to paint the editors as the villains in this saga. But from the editors' perspective, the "interference" is simply good business sense—and standard operating procedure. "I don't think there's too much [editorial] control," Powers says. "This is not so different from the way things are done on other books, except that there's more scrutiny and more personalities involved. I understand why people say that [the editors are too involved], but I don't think it's anywhere near as dramatic as it's been portrayed."

"The editors have a very difficult job," says Waid. "They are under constant surveillance by upper management to make sure that their cash cow continues to produce the same milk it produced the month before. In a market that is dwindling, that's always tough."

Then there's the hard numbers. "When you come right down to

TEAM SPIRIT Kelly and Seagle disagreed with the X-Men's new lineup. They wanted Cyclops to lead a team in *Uncanny* and have Beast teach younger members in *X-Men*. The X-editors felt it best to give fans one team of popular characters.

X-ORCISED

X-Men plots and tidbits you'll never see

Ever wonder what plans your favorite writer had in mind for the X-Men? "There were a lot of stories that were abridged or cut off at their knees," Lobdell says, "which kind of gives the justifiable impression that it's become a ship without a rudder, or maybe it's a ship with nine rudders." So what was left on the cutting-room floor? *Wizard* asked a few former X-writers about their unresolved plans for everyone's favorite merry mutants.

JOE KELLY AND STEVE SEAGLE

"One of the things we definitely were going to do was split the books up and give each one a definite agenda," Kelly says. "My team was going to include Beast running the school with the younger team members—Cannonball, the new guys [Maggott, Marrow], and maybe Kitty Pryde. Steve would take the '70s X-Men [Wolverine, Storm, Colossus], which would be more active, with a more focused agenda. Cyclops was going to lead that team, with a very clear dream that was different from Xavier's."

Also abandoned was a subplot that involved Phoenix. "Phoenix had started expanding her powers," Kelly says, "and there were going to be characters who had been watching since the Phoenix saga [*Uncanny* #130-#137] to see if the Phoenix force would return."

CHRIS CLAREMONT

"The most notorious [unused story] was the idea of killing Wolverine and then resurrecting him as a master assassin of The Hand," Claremont says. "What I had in mind was a two-year arc where Wolverine would lead The Hand against the X-Men, and they would have to deal with the fact that one of the linchpins of the team now counts among their deadliest foes."

SCOTT LOBDELL

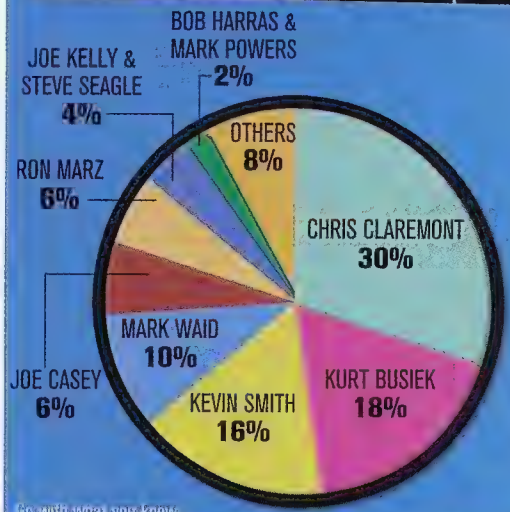
"I originally wanted Sabra to join the X-Men, so I went through the effort to bring her into camera and hopefully get her likable and interesting," Lobdell says. "And then [I] was told, 'We don't want her on the team after all.'"

MARK WAID

Waid disagreed with 1995's "Onslaught" plotline that made Onslaught himself a blend of both Magneto and Xavier's psyches. "It was always my conception that Onslaught was Professor X, pure and simple. The nonsense about adding Magneto's evil to that, not to me weakened [the storyline] and made the whole situation a lot less interesting." ■ JB

WRITER X

Who should write the X-Men? The fans speak out!



Go with what you know.

At least that's how it is with X-Men fans, who endorse X-veteran Chris Claremont as their choice for future X-writer, according to an online poll (www.wizardworld.com). "Chris Claremont's the one responsible for their popularity," said one voter. "His previous stretch was the definitive work on the book." Claremont's work on *Uncanny X-Men* and *X-Men* spanned from 1975-199[illegible].

But new blood nabbed a handy share of the votes as well. *Avengers* and *Iron Man* writer Kurt Busiek raked in 18 percent, though many voters felt this was somewhat of a pipe dream due to his already heavy workload. Kevin Smith snared 16 percent, with voters sensing that his style and flair with *Daredevil* would translate well to Marvel's favorite mutants.

Surprisingly, the most vehement responses came from the small number of write-ins for the tag-team of Bob Harras and Mark Powers, Marvel's editor-in-chief and X-Men editor, respectively. "They seem to write the damn things by themselves already," said one fan. "Why not make it official?" ■ NACHIE CASTRO

it, the [two X-Men] books have been the best-selling books in the industry, good and bad, for something like 20 years now," Nicieza says. "Somebody out there must be enjoying something about these books and characters."

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Strong sales or not, when half a dozen ex-X-scribes are making almost the exact same charges about a working environment, changes might be in order. Waid offers a simple solution:

"Let writers write the stories!" he says. "Hire good writers, and let them run. The reason Stan Lee and Jack Kirby produced amazing stuff was because they didn't have four or five people looking over their shoulder, changing their dialogue willy-nilly, and making them replot stuff halfway through a script."

"The only way for these books to be cohesive is to have one writer writing all of them, working with one editor who clicks 100 percent with that writer," Nicieza says. "What do you think the odds of that happening are?"

Powers sees no end in sight for the multi-headed creative staff, "for the simple reason that the X-Men consists of an entire line of books, not just one," he says of the nine-title line. "And even on just one book, you've got a writer, artist and editor. There's no way for this or any other line to succeed without true collaboration."

But is there "true collaboration" on the X-Men? "Somewhere along the way in the last year or two, somehow editors have managed to wrest complete control of the creative process away from the creators," Lobdell says. "You can see the direct correlation [between that] and a drop [in] sales, not only in the X-Men, but across the company and arguably across both Marvel and DC."

Regardless of who's right or wrong, both writers and editors are taking baby steps on the books for the foreseeable future—new *Uncanny* and *X-Men* plotter and penciler Alan Davis is under a six-month contract, and Nicieza is under a two-month scripting contract (in addition to writing the new *Gambit* ongoing). The lure of the X-Men remains strong, even if the desire to negotiate editorial politics does not. "A year or two ago, if anybody asked me, I'd have said you'll never see my name in a book with the [letter] 'X' in front of it again," Nicieza laughs. Neither Kelly, who remains under contract with Marvel until 1999, nor Seagle has closed the door on returning to the characters, as both are still brimming with mutant tales to tell.

DAYS OF X-MEN FUTURE

But in the short term, as long as writers and editors work at cross purposes, Kelly believes that fans will get nothing but inconsistent, lukewarm X-stories. "Steve and I had a cool, magic thing going, but it wasn't the kind of magic they were looking for, so what you get is something that falls in between their vision and our vision," Kelly says. "What they need to make that office run smoothly is a creative team that shares their vision, and if they do that, there's no reason that everybody wouldn't be very happy in that office. And that's going to translate to the fans." (W)

Georgia-based writer James Busbee always wanted to be an X-Men writer. But once he found out about the "Beast sponge bathing," he was waaaay outta there.

HEART BURN Lobdell says he rewrote *Uncanny* #325 six times from scratch because he felt Storm (left) shouldn't kill Marrow, as the editors wanted her to. Instead, Lobdell had Storm rip out one of Marrow's two hearts.

BLADE

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WARREN ELLIS, the writer who plans on putting the horror back in 'Hellblazer,' spills his guts about his twisted comic upbringing and why he'll never be allowed to write Superman

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THE WIZARD Q&A:

BY CHRIS HUTCHINS • PHOTOS BY STEPHEN ELLISON

Warren Ellis doesn't scare easily.

"The Devil in his fairy underpants and cape doesn't frighten me," says the 30-year-old writer. "I'm interested in real horror. Human horror. A guy kills a woman, cuts her face off, gets a screwdriver and carves a hole in her leg and thinks it looks sexy. There is nothing more frightening than people and what they do to each other."

And what people do to each other in Ellis' books is pretty frightening. Characters use "bowel disrupter" guns on U.S. presidents. They keep mutated, chain-smoking cats as house pets. They smoke, drink and gulp down narcotics by the metric ton.

The inspiration for these twisted thoughts comes from the British comic *2000 A.D.*, which Ellis stumbled upon as a youth in England. "It was like bringing up a little kid on lemonade and then, when he's 9 years old, giving him crack. I mean, you open up *2000 A.D.* and there—in full color—is a spaceship exploding, the crew tumbling out, their guts detonating in the vacuum. I was hooked."

Just like Ellis' readers are on his stories. During the last year and a half, they've seen trash-talking journalist Spider Jerusalem take on social injustice in the futuristic *Transmetropolitan*, and witnessed WildStorm's *StormWatch* team get slaughtered by aliens. And Ellis is just getting warmed up. He's taken over writing duties on Vertigo's *Hellblazer* with issue #143 in December, converting it to more of a horror book than a fantasy comic. In January, Ellis will pen the untold history of the WildStorm Universe in *Planetary*. His supercharged, balls-to-the-wall sequel to *StormWatch*, titled *Authority*, launches in March. And Spider Jerusalem will keep taking on The Man (and more drugs) in *Transmet*.

Wizard tracked down the former bartender to find out where all these twisted ideas come from. In an interview laced with profanity (what you'll read is our PG-13 version for our younger readers), Ellis sings the praises of the First Amendment in one breath and then drops jokes about sexual deviancy in the next.

enELLIS

WIZARD: During your comics career, you've been responsible for the wholesale slaughter of the Marvel Universe in *Ruins*. In other comics, we've seen mutilation, journalists wielding bowel disrupters and chain-smoking cats with two heads. Do you think your readers might see Warren Ellis as, um, an unbalanced individual?

ELLIS: That's me. A respectable family man and a pillar of my community. [*Laughs*] All I can say is I just write things that I'd like to read, and it reflects what I see going on around me. That may lead you to think the Devil speaks to me at night, but that's not the case. I just do what I do, and don't tend to analyze it.

You know, I really have no idea how readers perceive me. I kind of like it like that. You often get people who think they know you because they read your comics, but that's bollocks. I'm living a fairly stable lifestyle. I have a nice big house. I have a beautiful girlfriend and a lovely little girl. If people want to think I'm some bald, heroin freak living out in a shack gobbling uppers, then fine. Let 'em.

You use a lot of drug references in your stories. Do you do drugs? Are you a smoker? Anything like that?

I gave up drugs years ago, but I only quit cigarettes about six months ago. I was smoking 50 cigarettes a day, and I quit cold turkey. The first day, I found myself with lots of energy. The next, I was in bed, hallucinating. These were full-blown hallucinations, mind you—ones I hadn't had since my misspent youth. It was quite entertaining, in a horrible kind of way.

I do drink. I collect old and expensive whiskeys, then I drink the buggers and have to buy more. And I indulge in the occasional Cuban cigar, which I'm told you can't get in America. That's a shame, but it means more for me.

What's the sickest thing you've ever witnessed?

The sickest thing I've seen was someone trying to inject heroin into their tear duct. It was weird. You think you should scream and run away, but you find yourself watching—just quietly and calmly taking it in, because you can't believe what you're seeing. You have to take in everything to convince yourself it's actually there.

We hear you're planning some sick things in *Hellblazer*. What can readers expect?

Horror and pain. [*Laughs*] *Hellblazer* was a horror book, and it can be again: If it does not leave you disturbed, then it's not doing its job.

John Constantine's probably the most sophisticated character in comics. The first story is a six-parter, because I wanted to give John space to breathe. And to do many bloody, horrible things that will make people throw up.

I'm interested in John Constantine because he's a scheming little bastard. He's rotten. Once he's set his sights on doing you in, that's it. It may take him years, but he will do you. That's one of the things I like most about the character, and that's what I'm adhering to.

In recent years, *Hellblazer* became more of a fantasy book. I'm reducing the supernatural quite a bit, because I don't find it very scary.

The future of *Transmetropolitan* is pretty scary. Why is it so bleak?

I think it's probably slightly better than the present day. It just doesn't seem as bad to me. There are an awful lot of problems that have been licked in *Transmet*: disease, obviously. Lifestyle choices, in general. In these instances, I think living in The City is a lot better than what we're living with right now. And in a lot of cases, it's the same.

So what's in store for future issues?

I have *Transmet* planned out to run for precisely five years—60 issues. I've actually written the last issue—it's sealed in the computer. Don't ask: I won't tell anyone what happens. Right now, the next six-part story arc after [current story] "Year of the Bastard" is titled "The New Scum." It's more about The City. It's also about the slow dissipation of Spider, finally clawing his way back up to full humanity and then tumbling again. As far as year three goes, we'll see smaller story arcs and new characters. Year three is going to be a rough one for Spider. A lot of things go terribly wrong for him.

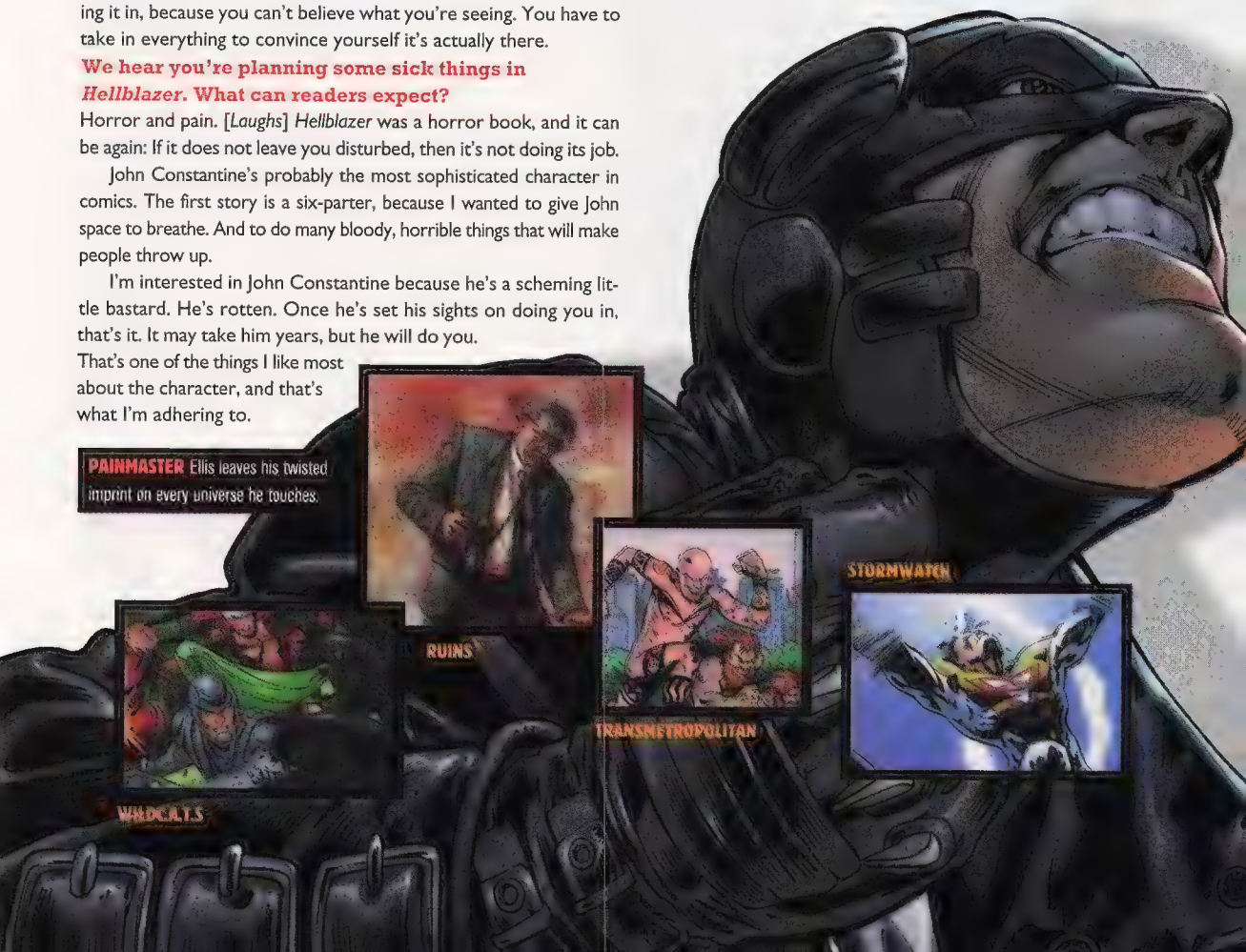
Any hints for the fanboys?

Yeah. "Read the sodding book, you bastards" would be a useful tip. "Give me money"—that's another good one.

Your stuff in *Transmet* is irreverent as hell. Political, too. Have you ever had any complaints from DC or any other companies about your stories?

Yeah, [DC and I] have had some edgy moments. There's nothing specific I really want to talk about, but know this: No matter what, they watch me like a frigging hawk.

When I was doing *Ruins* at Marvel, I had a few people worried. No one was looking forward to "The Ancient One rapes Baron Mordo in the snows of Tibet" sequence, or the "Doctor Strange



PAINMASTER Ellis leaves his twisted imprint on every universe he touches.

VITAL STATS

NAME: Warren Ellis

OCCUPATION: Writer of *Hellblazer*, *Transmetropolitan*, *Planetary* and *Authority*

AGE: "I was born in 1968 in England. I'm not telling you any more."

PLACE OF OPERATIONS: Southend, in southern England

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Ellis' mainstream comics start began in the early '90s with Marvel's *Dr. Strange* and *Excalibur*. He first gained his rep when he gleefully destroyed Marvel's icons in 1995's *Ruins* and made political intrigue exciting with *StormWatch* from 1995-98. In 1997, Ellis began his signature series with the futuristic political satire, *Transmetropolitan*.

CHARACTER HE'D NEVER WANT TO WRITE: Spider-Man. "He's just got that stink of adolescence about him," Ellis says. "In many places, he's been shown becoming stronger when he throws a tantrum. That is a curious lesson to teach children."

smoking dope in the Village" sequence. Yes, I wrote those; I still have them in the house somewhere. With *Ruins*, I wrote far, far more than I could use.

I had to change some things. I don't know why. [*Laughs*]

We hear you'll be changing a lot of things in the WildStorm Universe. With *Planetary*, you're basically writing the history of the WildStorm Universe, right?

Yeah, all the stuff the WildStorm U never noticed. The concept is that there has actually been a hundred years' worth of superhero activity in the WildStorm Universe that no one ever found out about. Because the adventures never came out in the public eye for one reason or another, we're just now finding out about them. *Planetary* is intended to be my last stab at the superhero genre. I don't intend on writing superhero books forever—writing commercial superhero comics month after month is a young man's game.

You're only 30!

I feel 130, ask anyone. I'm thinking of this as three years of me playing with the toys one last time, working with superhero icons and themes.

What kind of secrets will *Planetary* uncover?

For starters, a secret society of superhumans nearly ended the world in 1945. There's also a mythical, undead, gunfighting policeman in Hong Kong, and an island of very large dinosaur-like monsters between Japan and Siberia. I'm basically using the WildStorm Universe as a backdrop for the whole thing, but it's nothing someone who hasn't read the WildStorm Universe will have problems getting into. I have this planned for roughly three years. It may go longer, but we'll see.

You're also writing *Authority* for WildStorm. Where did the idea for that book come from?

Well, this had an awkward genesis that started in *StormWatch*. I was writing the series, but it just wasn't clicking. [WildStorm and I] agreed to close it down at issue #9. When we got the new artist for the book, Bryan Hitch, I rewrote my script for issue #4, aiming it for him a bit more. It looked great. His stuff works really well in the large scale.

That's when we realized some of the characters weren't dealing well with the new "widescreen" cinematic feeling of the book. So I decided to kill off some of StormWatch in *WildC.A.T.s/Aliens* and to do a sequel with the survivors taking on missions on a worldwide scale. The team'll be Jenny Sparks, Jack Hawksmoore, Swift, Apollo, The Midnighter, The Engineer and The Doctor.

Wait. Didn't The Engineer and The Doctor get offed in "Change or Die" [*StormWatch* Vol. 1, #48-50]?

Yes, but these aren't the same characters. It turns out, The Doctor we saw in "Change Or Die" was simply the latest in a long line of people called The Doctor. As each Doctor dies, a new one is selected and imparted with the memory of about 35,000 years of Doctors. The new Engineer was working on similar research as the original Engineer. At the instant of his death, he transmitted all of his research to her, and she combined it with her own. Now she's carrying nine pints of nanotechnological machinery instead of blood.

I have the first 12 issues of the book planned out in three four-issue arcs. The first one is the return of Kaizen Gamorra, with supervillain terrorism on a global level. It's supervillains like you've rarely seen them before. Hundreds of them.

And they're all frothing at the mouth.

Oh yes, they're quite mad. The second arc is one Bryan and I refer to as "The Flash Gordon Story." It answers the question: "What if Ming the Merciless—the old 1930s version—invaded Earth?" It's an "Independence Day"-style invasion with hundreds of 1930s rocket ships flying over American cities, having dogfights with F-14s.

The third story arc we have planned is essentially the Authority vs. H.P. Lovecraft. It's basically—to avoid lawsuits here—"Great Old Gods" returning to reclaim their ownership of Earth. The problem

"I'm living a fairly stable lifestyle. I have a nice big house and a beautiful girlfriend. If people want to think I'm some bald, heroin freak living out in a shack gobbling uppers, then fine. Let 'em."

will be, of course, topping myself. Each story has to be larger-scale than the last one. I don't want to cheat anyone by doing four stories of *Authority* sitting in a bar or something.

I get a lot of inspiration for the over-the-top stories from the science press and science books. That's where the big ideas are; you have to wade through books on nanotechnology to get to them. I also ask Bryan what he would like to draw, and that's great because Bryan's not like a lot of artists. Most would answer, "Guns. And girls. And rubber. And motorbikes. And girls. And leather. And...did I mention girls?" Bryan's slightly different in that he spends enough time on his own to think it's a good idea to have a dogfight with 1930s spaceships and F-14s over Los Angeles.

Since most of your superhero stuff is offbeat political intrigue, would you ever write any mainstream superheroes such as Superman or Spider-Man?

Superman would be interesting, because he's probably the only true myth the 20th century has produced. With Superman, it would be an interesting challenge to write something adult that didn't betray his background as a children's myth.

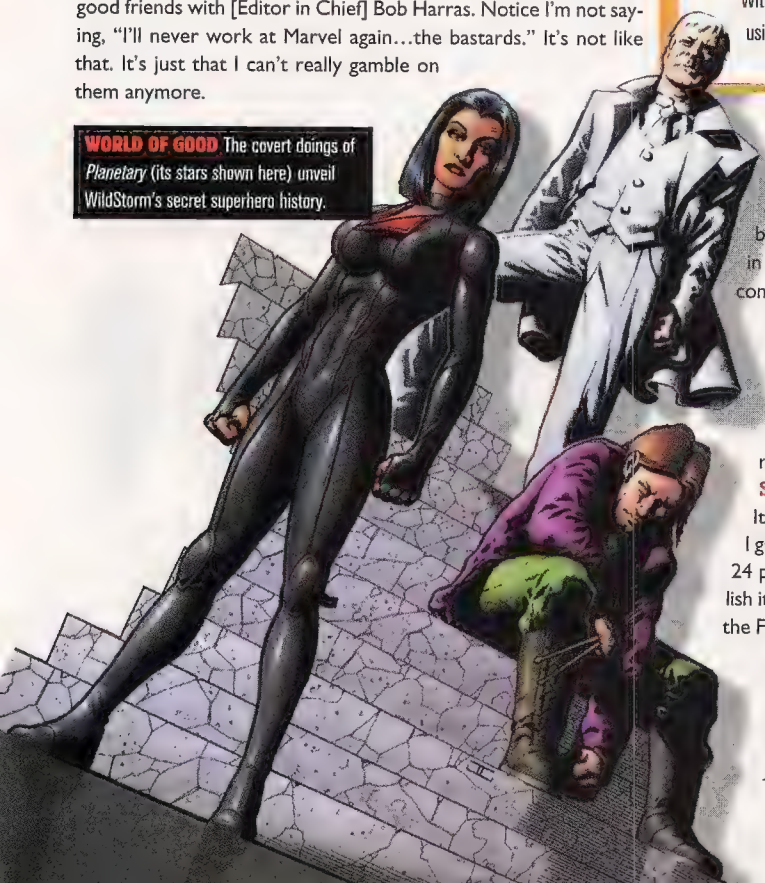
For instance, you couldn't do the "Superman Likes To Screw Sheep At Night" story. You couldn't do the story where Superman drinks lots of wine and goes out on the streets and beats up children. You couldn't have Superman having sex with Luthor's severed head, either. I mean, you *could*, but I wouldn't.

Why don't you have anything going with Marvel Comics right now?

Because they keep canceling every project of mine they take. There was *Satanna*, intended to be the flagship of their mature readers line [called "Strange Tales"]...and then they developed a new boss who said all Marvel books should be suited for children.

So, fair enough. I was then approached to create a 12-issue series that would run during 1999 about the upcoming millennium. I spent a year developing the damn thing, and was told the project was canned by the new owners. See a pattern?

I've got an awful lot of friends at Marvel. I still consider myself good friends with [Editor in Chief] Bob Harras. Notice I'm not saying, "I'll never work at Marvel again...the bastards." It's not like that. It's just that I can't really gamble on them anymore.



WORLD OF GOOD The covert doings of *Planetary* (its stars shown here) unveil WildStorm's secret superhero history.

Do you have any other projects on the burner right now?

I'm doing a three-issue series with Silverline Comics, titled *Station*. It's about a place out in the American desert built by an entire complement of Air Force personnel one day in the 1950s. It's an alien artifact, and immediately upon its completion, all 200 Air Force personnel committed suicide. It's kind of like "Contact"'s heroin-addicted twin brother.

I'm also a script doctor on a PC video game called *Hostile Waters*, in development for Rage Software. They came to me and asked me to help, so I'm writing the plot and background information and creating an alien race. It's a lot of fun—I haven't done anything quite like it.

So what's your dream project?

It's two pages long and I get paid $3 million for it. [*Laughs*] I guess my dream project would be for someone to give me 24 pages a month and say, "Do what you want. We'll publish it." You see, there's this wonderful thing in America called the First Amendment. That means you can say what you like. I have to remind editors that from time to time. W

Kentucky-based writer Chris Hutchins doesn't need to be reminded about the First Amendment. His mom just keeps washing his mouth out with soap.

DEATH ROW

If Warren Ellis were to kill some of the most popular superheroes, how would he do it? Ellis taunts, "Hey, 'Celebrity Deathmatch' has nothing on me in a bad mood."

BATMAN: "Hand grenades, and lots of them. People never go for the brute-force solutions. Just get hundreds of people to lob thousands of big grenades at him."

SUPERMAN: "The scenario is long and complicated and involves a Kryptonian venereal disease. But it works. And see, I'll now never be invited to work for the DCU, just like that."

WOLVERINE: "This seems so obvious to me. His healing factor seals all wounds. So you chop his head off and run off with it. What's he going to do, grow another head?"

SPAWN: "I guess you'd have to throw hundreds of other superhero characters at him until he used up all his magic. After that, a relatively determined 12-year-old could beat up the shriveled-up-looking sonuvabitch."

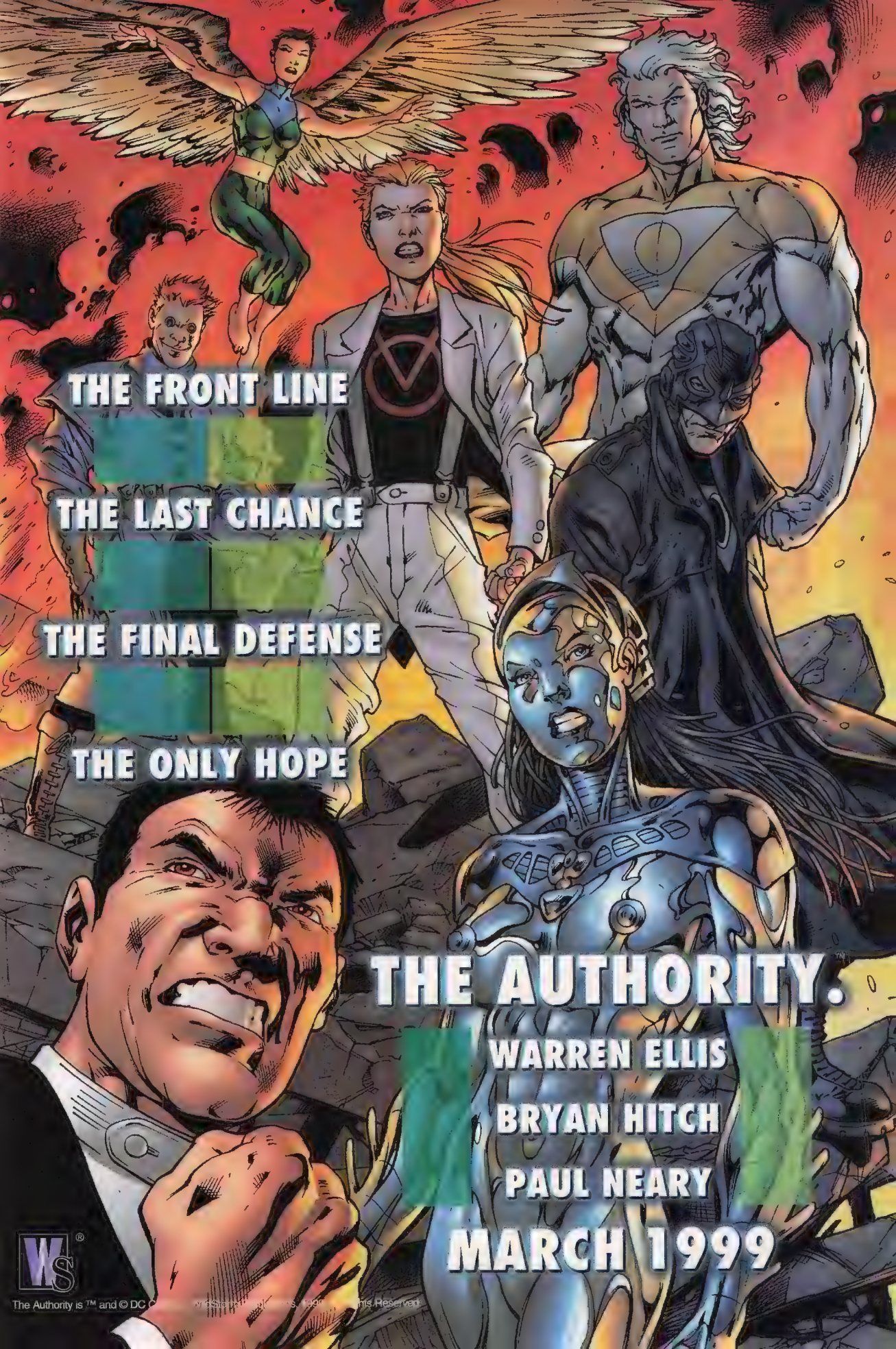
SPIDER-MAN: "Sniper rifle. Spider-sense never wins against rapid fire. Just pick him off as he drags his adhesive arse up some building, then leave him hanging there by his stupid sticky fingers. Let the birds feed off his carcass for weeks."

IRON MAN: "Hell, I don't know. Pull his batteries out. Lay him down and get dogs to piss in those holes in his face plate until he drowns."

CAPTAIN AMERICA: "This would have to first involve humiliation: drugging him, arranging for him to wake up in a bed full of Valiumed-up Brazilian rent boys dressed as Bucky. From there to suicide. Job done."

FLASH: "Put him in a room with Tori Amos and see who can bore whom to death quicker."

WONDER WOMAN: "How do you kill the world's toughest woman? With something really bloody heavy, I should think. Talk the French into using Paradise Island for their next nuclear test." ■ CH


THE FRONT LINE
THE LAST CHANCE
THE FINAL DEFENSE
THE ONLY HOPE
THE AUTHORITY.
WARREN ELLIS
BRYAN HITCH
PAUL NEARY
MARCH 1999
The Authority is ™ and © DC

1999 PREVIEW

COUNTDOWN TO WIZARD 2000

A sneak peek at the storylines of 1999's hottest books

It's a new year! After watching that big ol' apple fall in Times Square, you better shake off the hangover, sweep up the confetti and get readin'—'cause a new year means new comics!

Yep. Mutant healing factors and alien physiologies mean many of your favorite heroes hit the ground running hard on Jan. 1, and they're still chuggin' away while you're sleepin' late on those cold winter mornings.

Here's your chance to get a leg up. *Wizard* has done the research to fill you in *and* looked into its crystal ball to see what's in store for all your favorite books in 1999. So read on and enjoy. After all, it's pretty cool to know what Wolverine's gonna be doing even before *he* knows!

AVENGERS

CREATIVE TEAM: Kurt Busiek, George Pérez and Al Vey

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: After announcing what was supposed to be a "fixed" membership, the Avengers tradition of rotating members quickly reasserted itself—Warbird bolted, Justice and Firestar went on active duty, and oldies Giant Man and The Wasp have been seen hanging around.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: The team's rotating membership woes continue, but this time the changes are in leadership! Captain America and deputy leader Iron Man are busy in their own books, so the Avengers appoint an interim leader, creating changes in the team's operating procedures down the line. Issues #13-#15 introduce three brand-new villains. Guest stars will include the New Warriors in #13, Triathlon (who might become a future Avenger) in #15, as well as the much-ballyhooed return of the Beast in issue #14. Ah, but is he rejoining or just stopping by to say howdy?

DOWN THE ROAD: The tyrannical robot Ultron returns, and questions about Giant Man and Wasp's relationship will be central to the tale. Future issues will also address the Wanda, Vision and sort-of-dead Wonder Man love triangle. Also, look for a *Black Panther* storyline to impact *The Avengers* in '99.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Toy fans, assemble! Early '99 sees the release of Toy Biz's Famous Covers line including Hawkeye, Iron Man, Vision and Hulk, while the year's end sees an Avengers boxed-set featuring Iron Man (with removable helmet!), Hulk, Ant-Man, Giant Man, Wasp and Thor.

By Scott Brick and Jim McLauchlin

BATMAN BOOKS

CREATIVE TEAM: New creators rotate all year, every few issues

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: The earthquake-devastated Gotham City has completely gone to hell in a bucket. Now Batman must protect a lawless city that was *kicked out* of the United States! Oh, yeah—there's also a new Batgirl in town.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Times are tough in Gotham during the year-long "No Man's Land" storyline. Even the cops have been reduced to one of many street gangs fighting for turf. Simple necessities of life such as batteries and food are auctioned off for incredible sums of money, and the Penguin is runnin' the auction action. Think Bats is gonna try and loosen the bird's stranglehold on the city? Yep.

DOWN THE ROAD: You loved her in the "Batman Adventures" animated series; get ready to love her in the comic! Harley Quinn, the only woman crazy enough to be the Joker's sidekick, gets introduced to DC Universe continuity in a July story arc written by cartoon producer Paul Dini. And the new Batgirl? Her real identity is still tightly under wraps, but rumor has it DC might let fly with that surprise by mid-1999—or maybe leave it until 2000.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Look for a signed-and-numbered set of Batman prints by Alex Ross (based off the lenticular cover to *Batman: No Man's Land* #1), similar to last year's Superman set. Word on the street is that a new status quo—possibly with a new direction and all-new creators once again—will be on Batman's plate come 2000.

BATTLE CHASERS

CREATIVE TEAM: Joe Madureira, Munier Sharrieff and Tom McWeeney

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: After five issues of assembling, the team is finally a team. Gully (the little girl with amazing gauntlets of power), Knolan the wizard, Calibretto the war golem and Garrison the reluctant swordsman are at long last united.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: The book officially moves to bimonthly status with February's #6 as the band starts its quest to find out what happened to Gully's missing—and presumed dead—father. But tensions rise when Gully figures out that Knolan knows more than he's telling. Meanwhile, it seems Calibretto, last of the war golems…is really *not* the last of the war golems. There are more like him, only they're a lot more souped-up and decidedly more nasty.

DOWN THE ROAD: Just why is Garrison so reluctant to fight? He's tellin' everyone it's because of a promise he made to his late wife. But it might have something to do with a previous relationship Garrison had with Red Monika, the most buxom of buxom mercenaries. And as 1999 progresses, we find out more about the world the 'Chasers inhabit. A lot of technology gets mixed in with the magic of the team's sword-and-sorcery setting.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: You no longer have to live in a world without Battle Chasers merchandise. A Red Monika statue is definitely in the works for 1999, and deals for action figures, hats, T-shirts and even key chains are pending.

CAPTAIN AMERICA BOOKS

CREATIVE TEAM: Mark Waid, Andy Kubert and Jesse Delperdang (*Captain America*); Waid, Doug Braithwaite and Robin Riggs (*Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty*)

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Cap recently trashed the godlike villain Nightmare, while over in *Sentinel of Liberty*, we learned Sharon Carter will head up S.H.I.E.L.D. by 2001.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Beginning in issue #15, the Red Skull is suddenly imbued with the power of the Cosmic Cube. When the Watcher shows up in Steve Rogers' apartment to deliver a very important message about Earth's future should the Skull win their next battle, Cap moves to take his archenemy down. *Sentinel* #7 is a fill-in by Roger Stern and Ron Frenz, a story originally scheduled for the now-defunct *Marvel Universe*.

DOWN THE ROAD: Look for Sharon Carter to begin her road to S.H.I.E.L.D. leadership, but she's gotta go through the Red Skull (and Nick Fury) first. *Captain America* #14 is a spotlight on the Red Skull featuring an innovative artistic style, supposedly never before seen in a Marvel comic. In *Sentinel* #8-#9, drawn by Cully Hamner and set between *Cap* (vol. 1) #143-#144, the Sons of the Serpent adopt Cap as their mascot, changing their name to Sons of the Shield. Next up: an untold Bucky story!

THE INSIDE SCOOP: The adamantium race is on! Will Wolverine get his adamantium back before Cap gets his shield? That one's up in the air, but one thing's certain: Cap *will* get his shield back. "Oh, he'll get it back in 1999, but don't look for it to be a joyful reunion," says Waid.

DANGER GIRL

CREATIVE TEAM: J. Scott Campbell, Andy Hartnell and Alex Garner

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Abbey Chase, Sydney Savage and Natalia Kassle, the three main babes of Team Danger Girl, joined up with charismatic spy-guy Johnny Barracuda to retrieve the latest in a long line of artifacts—a bizarre gathering of mystic relics that seems destined to result in world domination.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: *Danger Girl's* first story arc wraps up in issue #7, set for spring/summer of '99. Issue #4 introduces new villain Major Maxim. Claiming to be part of the "collection agency" bent on retrieving the mystic objects necessary for world conquest, this modern-day Nazi nearly kills the Danger Girls when they cross paths. In issue #5, as Abbey Chase officially makes her decision on whether she'll remain with Danger Girl, the team travels across the globe, hoping to finish off the quest for arcane antiquities.

DOWN THE ROAD: The second storyline, beginning in #8, will introduce a new Danger Girl! Art Adams also contributes a *Danger Girl* one-shot, coming out at some point in '99 exclusively for Dynamic Forces. And while the Danger-folks are also looking into a *Danger Girl* source book listing character and weapon information, nothing official's been announced.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Toymeister Todd McFarlane will produce four Danger Girl toys, due to be released by mid-'99: Abbey, Sydney, Natalia and one currently undecided bad guy, available exclusively in comic shops. Also, the "Danger Girl" feature film from New Line Cinema seems to be proceeding better than the folks at Cliffhanger/WildStorm expected. Casting rumors include Ginger Spice and Elizabeth Hurley, but it's too early to say.

DAREDEVIL

CREATIVE TEAM: Kevin Smith (through #8), David Mack (#9-#14), Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: The Man Without Fear is the Baby Sitter Without Fear. Horn-headed hero Matt Murdock is keeping watch over a very special infant put in his care. Some think the kid will grow up to be the Antichrist. Some think she's the Savior. Daredevil's not sure yet.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: *Daredevil* #7 is lookin' to be the big turning-point issue, as all will be revealed about the mystery baby and what she represents. But before that, it's reunion time, as old arch-nemesis Bullseye shows up (To read passages from *Catcher in the Rye*. No foolin'.) and Matt's mother puts in an appearance. And with two of DD's old girlfriends—Karen Page and the Black Widow—still in the picture, you can definitely expect the *femme fatale* sparks to fly.

DOWN THE ROAD: Daredevil's love life gets even hairier. It seems Matt will actually get involved with three different women, each of whom appeals to a different part of his persona. One will appeal to his adventurous side, one to his lawyer-type book-smarts side, and one will have a handicap, just like him, that he identifies with. As for the Kingpin, expect to see stuff from his past that's never been revealed. Sure, we've all *heard* that he killed his first man at age 12, but David Mack promises he's going to *show* you what his past was like. As a presence, Kingy will be very hands-on. If there's a problem…he'll solve it with his hands.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Think you're gonna miss Kevin Smith? Not to worry. It's DD's 35th anniversary in 1999, and Smith wouldn't miss the party for anything. Look for the writer to return for at least one to three issues following Mack's run.

THE DARKNESS

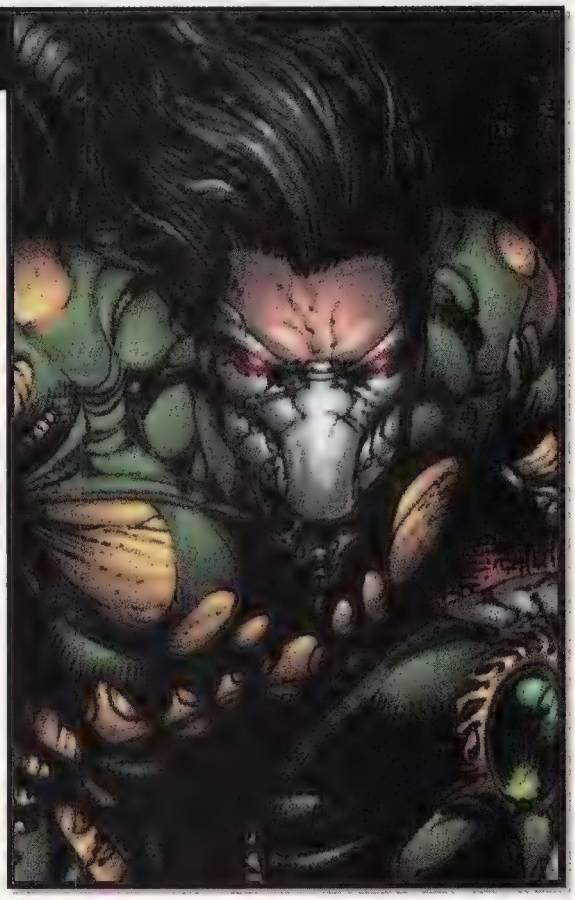
CREATIVE TEAM: Malachy Coney, Joe Benitez and Joe Weems (through #22), Scott Lobdell and Clarence Lansang (#23-forward)

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Jackie Estacado, mob hitman and reluctant wielder of the Darkness, just defeated the Magdalena and her invincible Spear of Destiny. Appolonia Franchetti, daughter of Jackie's *Mafia* kingpin, has taken possession of the spear. And it looks like a rival gang has put out a hit on Jackie.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Just when Jackie thought he could take a time out and chase women for a while, all hell breaks loose. There's a mess of hitmen lookin' to rub him out, and an old girlfriend may be the one behind it all. Amid all the chaos, Jackie must save Jenny, his closest friend, from the clutches of a small town gone evil.

DOWN THE ROAD: When former *X-Men* writer Scott Lobdell takes over, Jackie takes a bullet or two and the Darklings, those small Darkness demons Jackie conjures up, turn to some old acquaintances for help. Later in the year, look for a new (and sexy) FBI agent and her tough (and beastly) partner to start tailing Jackie, causing all sorts of trouble.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Looking for a glimpse 83 years into the future? Late 1999 is the tentative time frame for *The Darkness* #2000, a glimpse at what's gonna happen 1,975 or so issues down the line. Everything revealed therein will be in continuity, so it will "count." And Appolonia (with that powerful spear) may be spun out into her own mini-series. Also, don't forget April's *Darkness/Batman* crossover. Fans of *The Darkness* will be surprised to discover the long-lasting effects of this meeting.



FANTASTIC FOUR

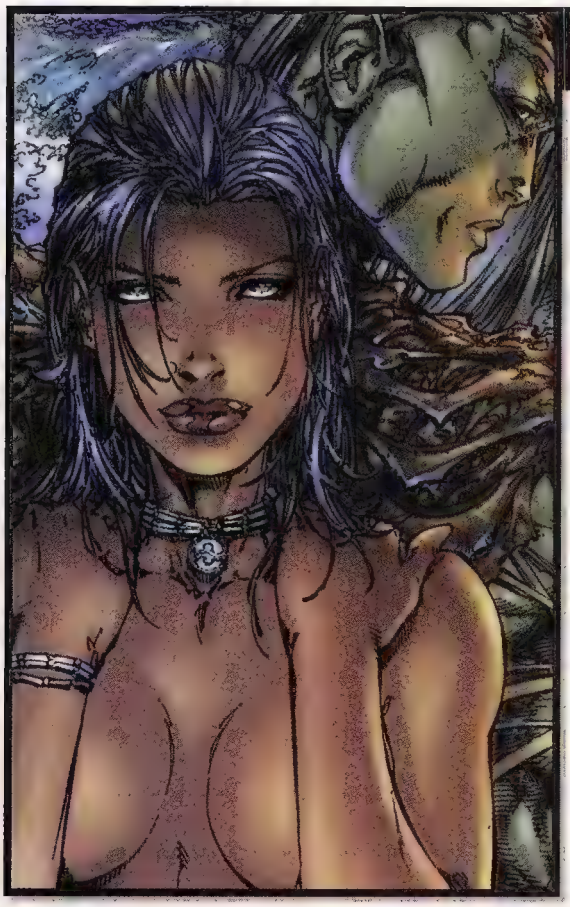
CREATIVE TEAM: Chris Claremont, Salvador Larroca and Art Thibert

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: The Fantastic Four's on the moon battling Kree warrior Ronan the Accuser. Franklin Richards, the massively powered young son of Mr. Fantastic and the Invisible Woman, waits at home with his nanny-from-another-dimension, Caledonia.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Iron Man makes a guest appearance to help out on the moon. But an equipment malfunction on the ride back home deposits the FF in the Negative Zone, where they're that dimension's most-wanted criminals! Later, the whole team saddles up and goes exploring through time and space for powerful weapons stolen from the team's old Four Freedoms Plaza headquarters.

DOWN THE ROAD: A new character called Bounty, who writer Chris Claremont describes as "the roughest, toughest, meanest and most gorgeous bounty hunter you've ever seen," shows up. She's been sent to bring Caledonia back home, but she kinda gets a case of the hots for Benjamin J. Grimm (the ever-lovin' blue-eyed Thing) while she's in town. Meanwhile, the Celestials remain ever wary of Franklin's power, and plan to get back into the thick of things. Over in Latveria, a certain doctor named "Doom" prepares for his return. And believe it or not, Pluto, the Olympian god of death, will make an appearance…as a crime lord. Since he's been lord of the Greek Underworld, he figures he'll take a stab at becoming lord of New York's crime underworld.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Hidden events from January's *Fantastic Four* #15 will rear their ugly heads again late in the year and just might cause strain on Reed and Sue's marriage. And be on the lookout for the Fantastic Four crossover with Superman and Gen[13].



FATHOM

CREATIVE TEAM: Michael Turner, Bill O'Neil and Joe Weems

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Aspen Matthews is a marine biologist at Deep Marine Discovery, a high-tech underwater research facility. She's also an amnesiac with a shrouded past who's developing water-based powers she doesn't fully understand.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: DMD got blown up real good by an errant torpedo, so we'll see the building of a new and improved facility. Aspen wakes up in a Honolulu hospital after the destruction of DMD, and doctors find some strange things in her physiology that they'll alert the government about. We'll also soon find out what happened to *Paradise*, the cruise ship Aspen was on as a child that went missing for years before mysteriously reappearing in a San Diego harbor. And Chase, the pilot who kinda blew up DMD? Well, he was the first to see Aspen use her powers, and you better believe he'll be questioning her about them.

DOWN THE ROAD: Looks like there are two races of undersea beings—and at least one of them will attack a mining rig off the New Zealand coast! Meanwhile, Aspen is approached by a member of one of the undersea races, who appears to have crucial information about her past…and her powers. Speaking of powers, Aspen will get a little better handle on hers. She'll find that she can change her body to water, and she'll learn how to bond coral to her body to use as protective armor.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Take the plunge with the Fathom action figure from Moore Action Collectibles. It'll hit in mid-'99 as part of M.A.C.'s "Top Cow II" line. And a Fathom video game? Well, get your fingers ready 'cause it'll be reality by late '99.

FLASH

CREATIVE TEAM: Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn, Paul Pelletier and Vince Russell

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Soon after Wally West married his longtime girlfriend Linda Park, Linda promptly disappeared. Even stranger, all of Wally's memories about the wedding and Linda are now completely gone!

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Weaving together obscure plot points from the last several years, the upcoming "Chain Lightning" storyline will be a six-part, millennium-spanning epic. Flash learns of a magical prophecy: villain Cobalt Blue's gem will consume two Flashes somewhere in the next thousand years before killing Barry Allen in the 30th century. (Barry lived there for a month before perishing in *Crisis on Infinite Earths*). Flash quickly springs into action because, if Cobalt Blue succeeds, he could place the outcome of *Crisis* in jeopardy.

DOWN THE ROAD: Flash enlists the help of Jesse Quick, Impulse, Max Mercury and Jay Garrick to traverse the next thousand years, trying to warn future Flashes about the gem. Those Flashes warn other future speedsters, and so on, and so on, and so on—essentially creating a giant chain letter through time. "Chain Lightning" climaxes in the double-sized #150.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Wondering where you've seen the upcoming storyline's villain? Check out last year's *Speed Force* special for Cobalt Blue's intro. Depending on whether fans enjoy the half-dozen or so new Flashes created for the "Chain Lightning" storyline, there's an excellent chance they'll be featured again in upcoming Flash projects.

GREEN LANTERN

CREATIVE TEAM: Ron Marz, Darryl Banks, Terry Austin and Georges Jeanty

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: When Green Lantern Hal Jordan returned to his proper time, he left a power ring as a present for current GL Kyle Rayner. Since Hal's ring could create copies of itself, Kyle took off into space to re-assemble a Green Lantern Corps, and appointed Jade his replacement back on Earth.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: January's #110 features a Green Lantern/Green Arrow crossover, only this time it's Jade teaming up with Connor Hawke. It'll feature an appearance by the first Green Lantern (and Jade's dad) Alan Scott, who will undergo costume and career changes. Issues #111-#112 feature appearances by Fatality, the assassin/bounty hunter from a few years back, as well as John Stewart (another former GL), not to mention Kyle's triumphant return from outer space.

DOWN THE ROAD: A brand-new villain debuts in #113. Mirroring Kyle's powers, Effigy fashions objects out of flame rather than green energy, being an offshoot from the Controllers, who are themselves genetic offshoots of the Guardians (creators of the orginal Green Lanterns). And in #115, GL fans'll rejoice as Donna Troy makes her long-awaited return, creating quite the love triangle between herself, Kyle and Jade.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: A two-issue GL/Nightwing series, written by Marz and Chuck Dixon, is currently in the planning stages. And Hal Jordan fans can get another fix of the Silver Age Green Lantern in a Flash and Green Lantern Year One-esque mini-series, scheduled for mid '99.

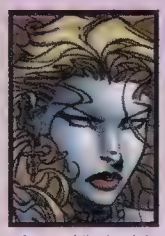
ALSO IN '99

AKIKO

Akiko and her space pals blast off from planet Smoo, but they crash-land on...Earth? Later in the year, look for a tale of what happens to the robot double that Akiko leaves in her place when she goes adventuring on Smoo.

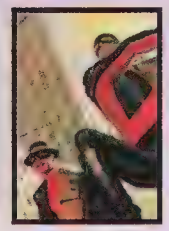
AQUAMAN

Underwater terrorist Charybdis–the man responsible for the loss of Aquaman's hand–is back, and he's deadlier than ever. He's now a giant piranha guy and actually *steals* Aquaman's telepathic ability to communicate with undersea life. Meanwhile, it's three-way love under the sea as a new character named Noble attempts to drive a wedge between Aquaman and his estranged wife Mera.



ASCENSION

Andromeda (the U.S. scientist studying the after-effects of Chernobyl) and her bodyguard Lucien head back to the U.S. in an effort to find Andromeda's long-missing parents. Meanwhile, back in the former Soviet Union, the evil Grigorieff starts wild experiments on the peaceful, other-dimensional Dayaks. And as a new female villain comes on the scene, a reluctant Andromeda and Lucien are drawn into battle.



ASTRO CITY

The seven-part Steeljack story, in which an ex-supervillain searches for whomever's killing a bunch of small-time villains in Astro City, finishes up in issue #19. January's #16 introduces El Hombre, a faded superhero from times gone by, while March's #17 introduces a new villain, the Mock Turtle. After several months, April should see a return to a monthly schedule!

BONE

Phoney Bone's on the move, away from the villagers who're still angry to hear he's not the dragon slayer he made himself out to be. He's off in search of Princess Thorn, who ran off

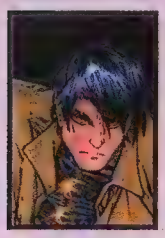
while everyone was sleeping. Issue #37, scheduled for spring, will reveal one of the central mysteries of the comic book: why everyone is searching for the one who bears the star.

CABLE

The Harbinger of Apocalypse, last seen in *Cable* #50, returns to destroy New York, so look for the Avengers and Fantastic Four to help Cable stop him. After that, the series will finally reveal who "The Twelve" are, those mysterious figures from X-Men mythology, leading right into "Apocalypse Now," the final showdown with Cable's arch-nemesis set for #75.

CATWOMAN

Catwoman's smart enough not to stay where there's nothing to steal, so she bolts outta Gotham for greener pastures. After vacationing in Paris, she returns to New York where she attempts to, uh, steal Manhattan. During her N.Y. adventure, she runs into an established DC character she's never met before and a possible new love interest. After that, it's back to Gotham where she'll be involved in "No Man's Land" for the second half of '99.



CRIMSON

Templar Knights come to New York to wipe out vampires in the very near future for a multi-part story, in which their motivations will get a little murky. Good guys? Bad guys? You be the judge. Officer Davis will be a focal point of upcoming stories throughout the next year. Lisseth, the character who's appeared to Alex in a dream and who's been hinted at since the first issue, will finally appear around #10 or #11.

DEADPOOL

In the aftermath of "Dead Reckoning," January's #26 features Deadpool living in a new place with a new supporting cast, and facing some brand-new mental problems! The rest of '99 will see the return of Weasel, as well as shocking disclosures about the identity of Blind Al. We'll also find out the real reason T-Ray hates Deadpool so much...an explosive revelation that'll lead to escalated hostilities.

THE HULK

CREATIVE TEAM: John Byrne and Ron Garney

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: In the aftermath of Betty Banner's death, Bruce Banner's "smart Hulk" persona submerged, leaving the "savage Hulk" in permanent control. Proving that some things never change, Thunderbolt Ross is still in hot pursuit.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: *The Incredible Hulk* relaunches with *The Hulk* #1 in February. Bruce Banner's on the road yet again, but this time he's beset by blackouts—when Banner regains consciousness, he discovers the Hulk's been busy. Unlike in the past, however, Banner has no memory of what he's done or where he's been or what triggered the Hulk's appearance. Frightened and feeling out of control, Banner moves as far away from society as he can. He'll spend the first six issues trying to discover what's going on, why it's happening, and who's behind it. An old, familiar face finally shows up, responsible for the whole mess.

DOWN THE ROAD: Although he's the man who married Bruce and Betty, and he could bring her back to life in about two panels, John Byrne plans on leaving Betty dead, at least for the foreseeable future. Look for a year-long story arc featuring Banner's life falling apart with no-one for him to turn to.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Look for a full-figured Randy Bowen Hulk statue comin' at ya by the end of 2000.

IRON MAN

CREATIVE TEAM: Kurt Busiek, Roger Stern, Sean Chen, Larry Stucker and Pat Zircher

WHAT'S GOING ON: Ever since he created Stark Solutions, the international problem-solving firm introduced in *Iron Man* (vol. 3) #1, a mysterious someone's been trying to kill Tony Stark. Recently, the Armored Avenger's been recovering from the major whuppin' he took at the hands of the new Mandarin.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: As of issue #14, Roger Stern will co-plot and script the book with Kurt Busiek. The first issue of the Busiek/Stern collaboration will begin a team-up with the Fantastic Four, featuring Ronan the Accuser, the Supreme Intelligence and the Watcher. Issue #15 co-stars Nitro in a story examining Tony's relationship with the Maria Stark Foundation. Issues #16-#17 feature a guest appearance by legendary Marvel monster, Fin Fang Foom.

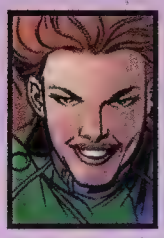
DOWN THE ROAD: Beginning in #18, look for appearances by Sunset Bain, the new War Machine and Jocasta. Tony continues to try and help Warbird with her drinking problem, and future appearances by Madame Masque are assured. Tony's re-emerging love life will also continue to flourish. All that, plus more hints that'll hopefully reveal just who the hell's been trying to kill Tony.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Fans who wonder, "When did Iron Man stop being a kid? Isn't he supposed to be dead?" should check out 1999's one-shot, *Iron Man: Look Back in Armor*. A whole mess o' continuity problems left over from previous creators' stints on the book will finally be addressed.

HIS CITY IS DEAD.
The Quest for Justice
Is Over...

DIVINE RIGHT: THE ADVENTURES OF MAX FARADAY

After escaping back to Earth from the Holo-Realm with his girlfriend in tow, Max Faraday finds himself hunted by the government. Despite beating a hasty retreat, Max finds himself in a climactic battle against nearly everyone in the WildStorm Universe. Creator Jim Lee claims Max is still in a state of flux, transitioning from regular person into hero, but very soon we'll see what that full-blown hero looks like.



GEN[13]

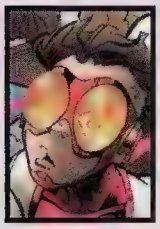
Change is in the air for the Gen[13] gang, as a new villain working in league with longtime nemesis Ivana Baiul enters the picture. Meanwhile, former happy-go-lucky Freefall takes a turn for the miserable, and cute li'l team mascot Queelocke returns…in a decidedly different form. And did we mention a major character will be dying soon? Yep. One Gen[13]-er takes the dirt nap in April's #40.

GENERATION X

Former X-Man Maggott drops by the Massachusetts Academy to learn more about his mutant powers. And that's *nothing* compared to what happens later in the year: The Academy throws its doors open to the public! Humans and mutants-in-hiding will be attending classes together!

HITMAN

Hitman Tommy Monaghan always thought he was an orphan. But in early '99, he's reunited with the parents and sibling he never knew he had. Soon after, Tommy heads into earthquake-devastated Gotham City to tangle with some vampires. Late in the year, one of Tommy's crew of fellow hitmen will sleep with the fishes.



IMPULSE

Putting the "Imp" back in Impulse, Todd Dezago hops on board in May. The plot for his initial three-parter remains top secret, yet it promises to feature tons o' guest stars, and will result in some changes to Impulse's supporting cast. The tone of the book will stay light, but look for the

JLA

CREATIVE TEAM: Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: The 14-member Justice League of America is on call to deal with world-threatening crises. The League just came off a massive battle with the Ultra-Marines, government-created, battle armored super-soldiers commanded by rogue Gen. Eiling.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: The JLA teams up with the Justice Society of America, a World War II-era DC superteam, in a three-issue story arc. A brand-new Johnny Thunder character debuts and a revamped JSA will spin out into its own series. But that's just the warm-up.

DOWN THE ROAD: Prison break! More than 200 nasty-bad supervillains bust outta Belle Reve Prison and the only group big enough to deal with 'em is the JLA! An all-new Injustice Gang forms from the break, headed by technological badass Prometheus and including Gen. Eiling, now inhabiting the indestructible body of old JLA nemesis the Shaggy Man.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: The prison break? Could be the evil machinations of a new villain called Mageddon. Seems Mageddon's a living weapon created by an old race of gods, and his plan is to have *total war* break out in the DC Universe. After Mageddon rears his ugly head, Grant Morrison, *JLA* writer and guiding force of the title, will be leaving. But rumor has it Morrison will kill off a JLA member or two as a going-away present.

PREACHER

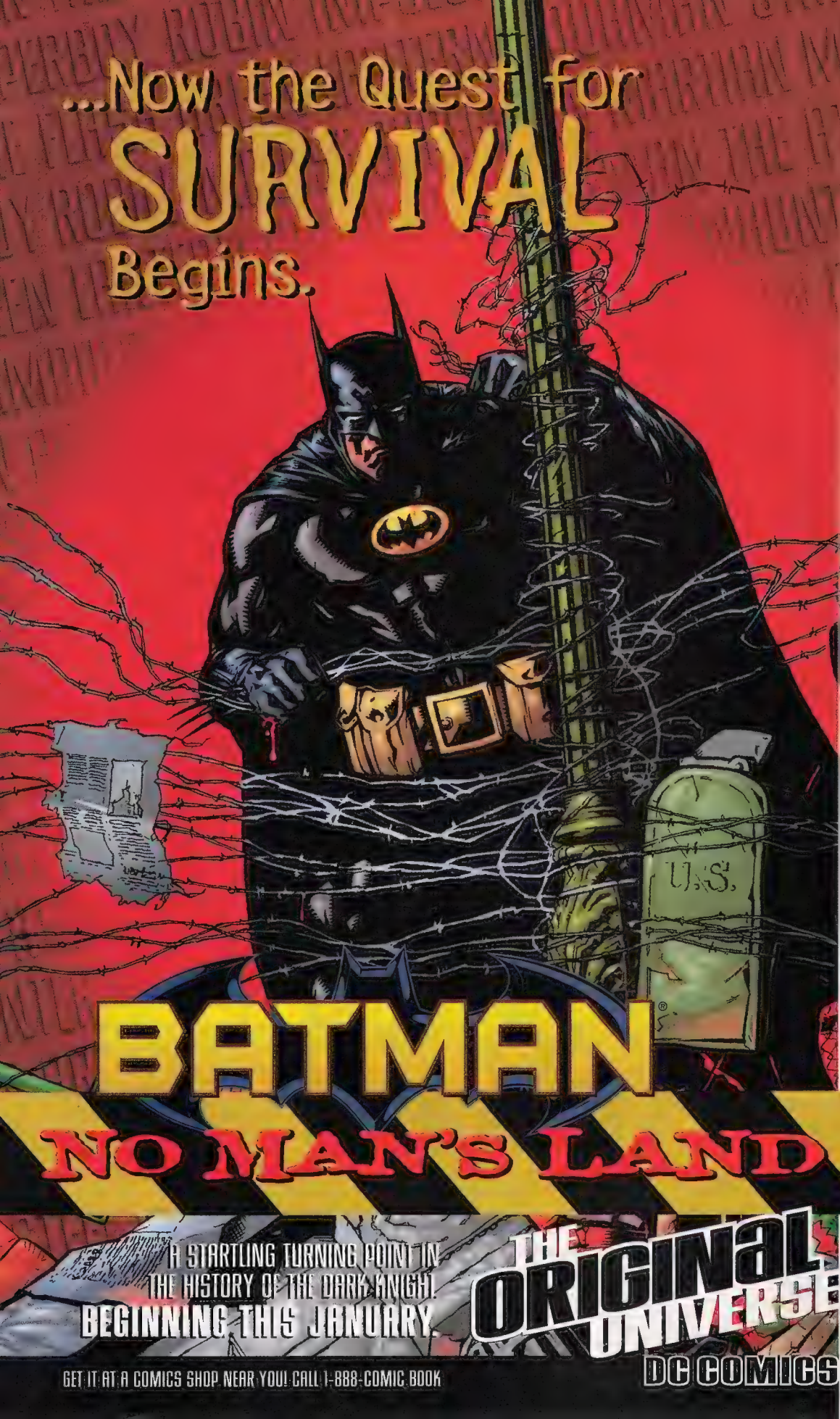
CREATIVE TEAM: Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Preacher Jesse Custer is now the sheriff of Salvation, Texas. He's still looking for God (gotta make the Big Man get back to Heaven and do His job!), and has just been reunited with his long-lost and presumed-dead mother.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: The year kicks off with Jesse still tusslin' with the Meatman, the evil owner of a local meat-packing plant. By the time all is said and done, we'll see the real power behind the Meatman, and see that ol' Meaty is perhaps the creepiest of creepy *Preacher* villains.

DOWN THE ROAD: The core cast reunites, as Jesse gets back together with former girlfriend Tulip and former best-friend Cassidy. And since Tulip and Cass are kinda…involved right now, love-triangle tension ensues. April's super-sized #50 will tell a tale of Jesse's Vietnam-vet father, and will feature a gallery section with Preacher pin-ups by a bunch o' top artists. Late '99 should see yet another wild-and-woolly *Preacher* one-shot special, this one tentatively slated to focus on a young Jesse and Tulip.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: It's all coming to an end. *Preacher* has been scheduled as a really, really long mini-series right from the start. Look for the final issue, scheduled to fall between #66 and #68, in 2000. Herr Starr, the Saint of Killers, a squadron of angels and God are expected to appear. Get your tickets now. Good seats still available.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stakes to be higher. Some things'll never change, though – Impulse will still do the right thing. . .after he's exhausted all other possibilities, that is.

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES

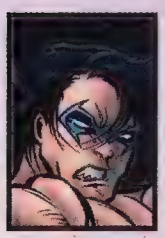
In *Legion* #113, the super-teens get a funky new gizmo: the Anywhere Machine, a device that'll let you look anywhere in creation. . .even into the heart of a sun. In issue #114, the Legion gets turned into Bizarros–instead of turning into three girls, Triad now turns into 1/3 of a girl! After that, *Legionnaires* gets a new cast member: Thunder, a future female version of Captain Marvel.

MARTIAN MANHUNTER

In his human persona as police detective John Jones, Martian Manhunter is framed for murder. When various agencies both earthly and otherwise start investigating, secrets are revealed about the origins of all Martians. Later, the Manhunter is forced to go up against his JLA teammates when eyewitnesses accuse him of experimenting on humans in trying to start a new Martian race.

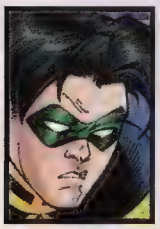
MUTANT X

In January's issue #6, a team member gets framed for murdering two prominent Marvel characters. In April's issue #9, the alternate universe's X-Men finally show up! And when the Mutant X universe begin threatening the Marvel Universe this summer, the *real* X-Men show up.



NIGHTWING

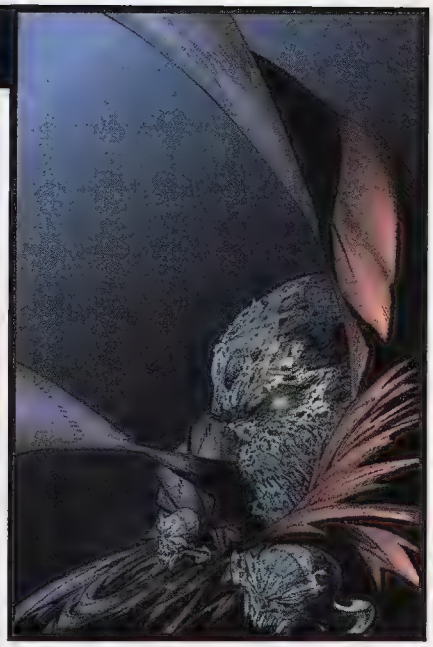
In February, Superman makes an appearance as we learn a shocking secret about Blockbuster. March features Dick and Clancy's first date, after which Nightwing gets called to Gotham to help out in "No Man's Land." Oh yeah, somewhere in the midst of all this, Nightwing battles Double-Dare, a deadly acrobatic duo.



ROBIN

Tim's bummin' when he and his dad move away from the destruction of Gotham City. Winding up in Keystone City, Robin partners with Flash for three issues

SPAWN



CREATIVE TEAM: Brian Holguin, Greg Capullo and Chance Wolf

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: The last several months saw creator Todd McFarlane and new writer Brian Holguin create a darker, more horrific tone for Spawn's adventures, getting back to McFarlane's original intent for the character.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: After 75 issues of preparing for his mission, Spawn will soon find out just what that mission is. A lot of the early, rash decisions he made are coming back to haunt him. Early '99 will see the return of classic Spawn villains, but not in any form fans expect. There'll be a major shakeup with the Terry and Wanda storyline, while Sam and Twitch become tied to Spawn's operations as a nocturnal avenger. Although they'll remain somewhat adversarial, they'll become his hands in the real world and on the police force.

DOWN THE ROAD: McFarlane has a shocking revelation in the works. He and Holguin are keeping silent, but claim it'll be HUGE. Fans should look for it around December of '99. Although *Curse of the Spawn* is no more, *Spawn: The Dark Ages* will be an ongoing monthly with art by William Sharpe which'll expand upon the legend of Medieval Spawn. Although you won't have to read both titles, there will be a degree of interaction, specifically around Spawn's mentor, Cogliostro.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: 2000 will be a big year for Spawn, featuring the second movie in the Spawn franchise, as well as the publication of *Spawn* #100, both currently scheduled for the summer of 2000.

SPIDER-MAN BOOKS

CREATIVE TEAM: Howard Mackie, John Byrne and Scott Hanna (*Amazing Spider-Man*); Mackie, John Romita Jr. and Hanna (*Peter Parker: Spider-Man*)

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: In just the last few months, Peter Parker's loving Aunt May came back to life, his supermodel wife Mary Jane returned to modeling, and Spidey finally defeated Norman Osborn, blowing up the Daily Bugle building in the process. Oh yeah, Peter Parker also quit being Spider-Man. So who's this new guy running around in a Spidey suit?

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: February's *Amazing* #3 continues the multi-part story arc with the all-new villain Shadrac, and guest stars that wacky X-fella Iceman. The story continues over in *Peter Parker* #3, which sees the end of the Shadrac situation and reveals the identity of the new Spider-Man, who's in way over his head.

DOWN THE ROAD: That bony X-chick Marrow will guest-star in *Peter Parker* #4, elaborating on her relationship with the Morlocks' Callisto. The Trapster shows up in *Amazing* #4, where he'll attempt to lure Sandman back into super-villainy. It's half of the Frightful Four, together again, resulting in an appearance by the Fantastic Four. The crossover between *Amazing* #5 and *Peter Parker* #5 will focus on the women in Peter's life, including a new Spider-Woman designed by John Byrne.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Although no official release date has been set, look for a full-figure Spider-Man statue from Randy Bowen in late '99 or 2000.

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when Captain Boomerang and the Riddler team up. After a cameo by Superman, Robin gets called back to Gotham to help out. All Tim has to do is to convince his dad to move back to Gotham...

SAVAGE DRAGON

It's a big year for Dragon, as he gets married, widowed and finally retires from fighting crime in order to take care of his step-daughter full time! So how's a green guy with a fin on his head pay the bills? He starts doing TV commercials! But later in the year, Dragon just might start to feel the urge to return to the police force.

SLINGERS

The Slingers–Dusk, Hornet, Prodigy and Ricochet–learn some of the secrets behind their mysterious benefactor, the Black Marvel. We'll find out how he got the money to run a superteam, and why he's motivated to do it. On the villain front, a new Slingers-centric nemesis will be introduced, and the unstoppable Juggernaut will appear. Oh, yeah–we'll also find out just how Dusk was able to resurrect herself.

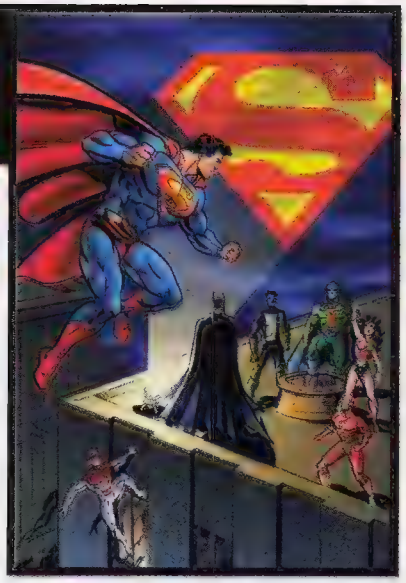
SPIDER-GIRL

May Parker, the future "What If...?" daughter of Spider-Man, gets more training in her powers. Friendly help comes from former Green Goblin Phil Urich and the Man Called Nova, while "tough-love" training comes from the mysterious Darkdevil. Oh, yeah–we also find out just how Peter Parker lost his leg and why he retired as Spider-Man.

STARMAN

Issue #50 explains Starboy's possible destiny as the *Kingdom Come* Starman, after which Jack Knight journeys through outer space (and time!) during much of '99. He'll meet Jor-El on Krypton before it explodes, go swashbucklin' with Adam Strange, and meet several other heroes named Starman. Everything's building toward #63, an epic war between good and evil. Issues #56-#61 will feature interconnected covers painted by Tony Harris and Alex Ross, spotlighting every incarnation of Starman.

SUPERMAN BOOKS



CREATIVE TEAM: Stuart Immonen and José Marzan Jr. (*Action Comics*); Jerry Ordway, Tom Grummett and Denis Rodier (*Adventures of Superman*); Dan Jurgens, Steve Epting and Joe Rubinstein (*Superman*); Mark Schultz, Doug Mahnke and Dennis Janke (*Superman: The Man of Steel*); Louise Simonson, Paul Ryan and Dennis Janke (*Superman: The Man of Tomorrow*)

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: The most hostile of takeovers has happened: Badass/businessman/criminal Lex Luthor has bought the Daily Planet...and folded it! Clark Kent is out of a job. Meanwhile, worldwide disasters are breakin' out, well...worldwide, and Supes is goin' nutty trying to stop them.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Hey, he's outta work anyhow, so Superman decides to ditch the "Clark Kent" routine and be Superman full time to deal with world crises. He's even gonna build a batch of Superman robots to help him out. Supes and the 'bots will cross over into *Green Lantern*, *Impulse*, *Nightwing* and elsewhere to pitch in.

DOWN THE ROAD: Who knows? DC Comics usually beats the tar out of all other publishers in advance planning, but all indications are that *nothing* is known about Superman beyond February. A new editor is on board in the person of Eddie Berganza, so we could be looking at a massive overhaul by spring.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: For now, quarterly one-shots such as the recent *Supermen of America* are planned as ongoing and in continuity. There are now 56 Superman books in a 52-week year. And a 10-issue *World's Finest* mini-series starting in February will examine the relationship between Superman and Batman over a 10-year period.

THOR

CREATIVE TEAM: Dan Jurgens, John Romita Jr. and Klaus Janson

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Asgardian thunder god Thor has been forced by a mysterious entity named Marnot to live the life of mortal Jake Olson. Meanwhile, the other Norse gods are missing and Asgard lies in ruins, occupied by a powerful group of "Dark Gods."

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: War of the gods, baby! May's *Thor* #12 is the culmination of a full-blown gonzo whopper Dark Gods vs. Thor battle! We'll find out who the Dark Gods are, where the rest of the Asgardian gods are, and most importantly—who Marnot is. "Everyone's been trying to guess Marnot's identity," says writer Dan Jurgens. "And I'm happy to say not a single person has gotten it right yet."

DOWN THE ROAD: Mjolnir, Thor's sacred war hammer, has been on the blink. Look for the answer as to why it hasn't been obeying Thor as it should this summer. And while you're at it, look for a guest appearance by Marvel's first family: The Fantastic Four will be crossing over for an issue or two. On the mortal secret-identity front, Thor's relationship with Hannah Fairmont, Jake's fiancée, deepens. But Thor's former girlfriend Jane Foster keeps hangin' out on the edge of things.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: January's *Thor Annual* tells what happened when Thor went missing between *Heroes Reborn: The Return* #4 and *Avengers* #1. Secrets are revealed that will have lasting ramifications in the Marvel Universe. There's also talk of a *Tales of Asgard* one-shot.

1999

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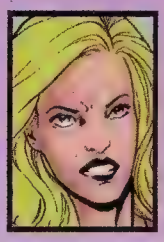
STRANGERS IN PARADISE

Katchoo watches in horror as her roomie and best pal, Francine, has an affair with a married man. Later on, that busy Francine meets another man named Brad who will be...her future husband? Yep. Also, look for newspaper-style short backup strips in the book all year, and a *Strangers in Paradise* source book/trivia book by late 1999.



SUPERGIRL

Earth-born angel Supergirl has a serious identity crisis as she comes face-to-face with Matrix, the alien who *used* to comprise half her body. Later in the year, the Parasite comes callin' looking to suck up some power, and Superman hits town. Unfortunately, Big Blue ain't too happy with Supergirl.

TITANS

Debuting in January, the new Titans will have 10 members: the five originals and five new back-ups. There's a new HIVE out there, backed by a mysterious entity that'll stay mysterious for quite a while. Also on the horizon is a new group called Tartaraus, named for the prison which held the titans of Greek mythology, that'll wind up being known as the Anti-Titans. Look for its debut in January's *Titans Secret Files.*

TRANS-METROPOLITAN

Take-no-crap journalist Spider Jerusalem is hip-deep in covering the presidential election. But both candidates want his endorsement. Unfortunately, the wrong man gets elected and Spider finds his life getting MUCH more difficult. Plus, it looks like Spider is *this* close to getting out of his newspaper contract. If he can, he'll be hightailing it out of The City that he hates so much.

USAGI YOJIMBO

This year's running theme will be "mysteries and secrets," as Usagi prepares to turn the sacred sword Grasscutter over to a temple. January's #26

THUNDERBOLTS

CREATIVE TEAM: Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Scott Hanna

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: For months the Thunderbolts hid from the law, afraid of prosecution for the elaborate ruse they pulled while teamed up with Baron Zemo. After a recent tussle with the Avengers, the T-Bolts have been licking their wounds, trying to prove themselves the heroes they believe they can be.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Big things are in the T-Bolts' future. Issue #24 features a conflict with the Crimson Cowl's new Masters of Evil promising to be bigger than any previous Masters storyline ever! Old tensions might arise as the T-Bolts deal with their new leader Hawkeye, since several members have tried killing him in the past. The new Citizen V is snooping around, and there'll be more revealed about his identity. Issue #25's a huge, kick-ass, double-sized anniversary issue that'll shake up the Thunderbolts' roster. The Crimson Cowl will finally be unmasked, and we'll learn just what's causing Moonstone's dreams.

DOWN THE ROAD: Beginning in #26, look for more focus on individual character plots. The Thunderbolts have been in a group-reactive mode for most of their history, showing individual members dealing with essentially the same problem: What does it take to be a hero? In the future, there'll be individual problems and separate character plots.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Great news for toy fans—Toy Biz is currently designing Thunderbolts action figures. Although there's no guarantee they'll ever hit the shelves, it seems a high probability.

WITCHBLADE

CREATIVE TEAM: David Wohl, Christina Z., Randy Green and D-Tron

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: While New York City police detective Sara Pezzini is back in control of the mystical Witchblade gauntlet, the immortal villain Kenneth Irons is back from the dead.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Sara's getting a new partner in fighting crime. Good ol' Jake McCarthy got busted up in the line of duty, so he'll move on to a new career. Enter detective Eric Sketh, fresh from the West Coast. Only problem is, he and Sara don't exactly hit it off all too well. And Ian Nottingham, the assassin who *was* in control of the Witchblade, recovers from his wounds while Kenneth Irons takes control of the cult-like First Church of Holy Prosperity. And oh, yeah—it looks like Sara's little sister, Julie, is going crazy.

DOWN THE ROAD: Sara keeps finding tiny pieces of the puzzle that might unlock the mystery of how her father *really* died. Meanwhile, Setsuke, the young Japanese girl tending to Nottingham, gets a serious case of Florence Nightingale syndrome and falls for the big lug. Now that might cause some tension, seeing as how Sara shares a strange mental bond with Ian and has always had a bizarre love-hate relationship with the guy.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Remember how the Darkness and the Witchblade were supposed to be opposite, yet linked, forces? Well that li'l tidbit will be touched upon anew in another Witchblade/Darkness crossover slated for late 1999.

THE VICTORIAN™

"Yet you, my brothers, must be saved from those greater than all the saviors, if you would find a way to your own freedom! – Behold, I speak the word of the great noontide of earth and man, to tell, once again, of the Superman..."

100 years ago a Prophet foretold his coming.

WITNESS HIS ARRIVAL
AT COMICS SHOPS IN MARCH 1999
FIRST ISSUE COVER BY JIM STERANKO
Created/Developed by Trainor Houghton

This is not the Superman you grew up with.

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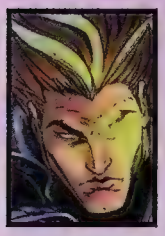
begins a two-part whodunit in which Usagi helps find a serial killer. In #28, Usagi gets mixed up in a plot to assassinate a high-class prostitute with a dangerous secret. Then, in #29, Usagi's in a haunted house, the Full Moon Out Inn.

VAMPIRELLA

Vampi starts the year trapped in Hell at the mercy of a kajillion vampires. By the time she busts out and gets to her home planet of Drakulon, her world gets invaded by Chaos! Comics' Lady Death! After the Lady Death bust-up, Vampi searches for the mythical Heart of Darkness, the only object that can revitalize her dead world.

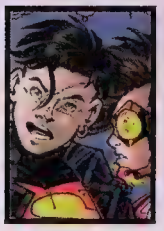
X-FORCE

New members hit the mutant resistance team! Siryn is sidelined as her powers undergo a change for the worse. Cannonball, back from a stint with the X-Men, takes over again as team leader. Then there's also the brief return of Cable, the team's former mentor. And by late '99, X-Force heads into all-out war.



X-MAN

Super-mutant Nate Grey vows to clean up the leftover mess from his Age of Apocalypse reality: Nemesis, Dark Beast and Sugarman. In #50, Nate'll have words with *Generation X*'s White Queen, who aided Dark Beast when he first showed up in the Marvel Universe. And love is in the air, as #51-#52 features the debut of Cinder Fontaine, a possible new romantic interest for Nate.



YOUNG JUSTICE

Hormones rage on as some girls join the team! Robin, Superboy and Impulse are joined by The Secret (from the "Girlfrenzy" one-shot), Arrowette (Impulse's friend), and Wonder Girl (Cassie Sandsmark from *Wonder Woman*). Later, the team takes on the serious threat of JLA foe Despero, then the not-so-serious "Old Justice," a team of forgotten Golden Age sidekicks bent on getting rid of today's young whippersnappers! ■

WOLVERINE

CREATIVE TEAM: Erik Larsen, Jeff Matsuda and Jon Sibal

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: It's Wolverine...in space! Kidnapped by an escapee from a prison planet, Wolvie is marooned on that same planet, with about a zillion hostile prisoners.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: When Wolvie gets back to Earth (duh), he's gonna get his ass kicked. Repeatedly. "Wolverine's been handling the loss of his adamantium way too easily," says writer Erik Larsen, who's gonna throw a number of titanic classic Marvel villains at Wolverine. "I'm gonna show him getting his clock cleaned. He's gonna really, really want to get his adamantium claws back."

DOWN THE ROAD: Hey, it's a quest for adamantium! It'll be summer at the earliest, but you can carve it in stone: After a six-year layoff, Wolvie will finally get the indestructible metal adamantium bonded...to his claws, at least. The rest of his skeleton? That's still a "maybe." Look for an all-new lineup in Wolvie's supporting cast. Old friend Carol Danvers (recently Warbird of the Avengers) might be hanging around, and an old X-Men supporting character is looking to open a bar that's a hangout for tough-guys such as Wolvie.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: Don't look for the city of Madripoor to play a key role in Wolvie's future. "The only goal now in my entire life is to leave Madripoor a smoking crater," Larsen says. And if Madripoor is outta the picture, there's a good chance Madripoor's crime-queen and Wolvie's wife Viper is outta the picture. New love could come lookin' for something short, furry and very Wolverine.

X-MEN BOOKS

CREATIVE TEAM: Alan Davis, Chris Bachalo and Tim Townsend (*Uncanny X-Men*); Davis on plot and art (*X-Men*)

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW: Soon after jettisoning every remaining member of the original team and welcoming Colossus, Nightcrawler and Kitty Pryde back to its ranks, the X-Men embarked on a quest for Charles Xavier, who'd been in custody since the Onslaught incident, but was subsequently "lost" by his captors.

WHAT'S GONNA HAPPEN: Magneto returns to center stage in the Marvel Universe with "The Magneto War," a multi-part event that'll rock the X-Men's world. No, this won't be the "Joseph" version everyone assumed was a mind-wiped Magneto, although the storyline promises to address Joseph's relationship to the Master of Magnetism. Everything begins in January with *X-Men: The Magneto War* #1 and continues into *Uncanny X-Men* #366-367 and *X-Men* #86-87.

DOWN THE ROAD: Look for the Magneto War to have long-lasting ramifications, not merely to the X-titles but also to the rest of the Marvel Universe. Sure they say that all the time, but this time they mean it.

THE INSIDE SCOOP: John Byrne recently confirmed he'd like to launch *X-Men: The Hidden Years* at some point in '99, a lengthy mini-series that'll fill in *Uncanny X-Men* #67-#93, the period when Marvel ran reprints of earlier X-Men adventures.

California-based freelancer Scott Brick and senior staff writer Jim McLauchlin know too much.

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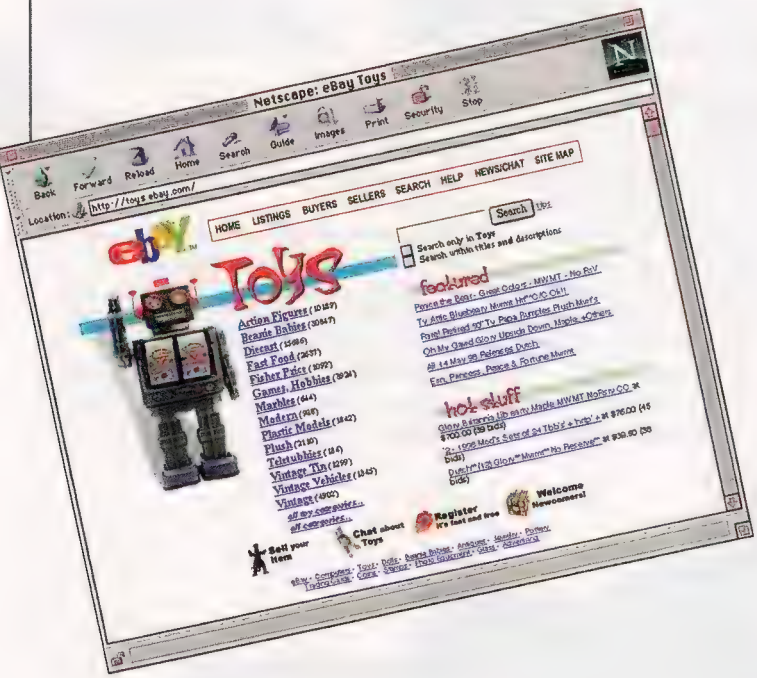

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CASTING call

WIZARD casts the TITANS MOVIE!

BY A BUNCH OF WIZARD STAFFERS

It *won't* be about a buncha Greek gods.

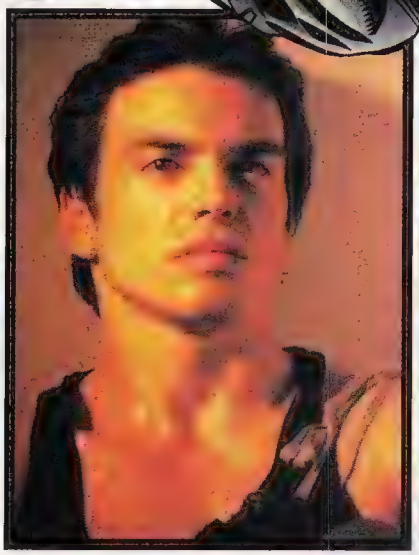
Those Titans got their lungs handed to 'em by the likes of Zeus, Hera and Ares. These Titans (otherwise known as Teen Titans in their younger days) are the ones opening up brand new cans o' whup-ass! And, in keeping with that theme, a "Titans" movie would kick some major tail!

The eagerly anticipated return of the Teen Titans (now a bit older) to comics pages has finally come to pass—and fans are eager for more. This fast-paced, "clash"-of-the-Titans, big-budget bonanza would have it all! Cool heroes! Twisted villains! A killer headquarters named Titans Tower! And best of all, the hottest thing going in today's entertainment field: young stars.

So Hollywood, wake up! We've already done the casting for ya. All's you need is a script, some makeup and a few cameras. Heck, passing on this movie would be, well, a titanic disaster.

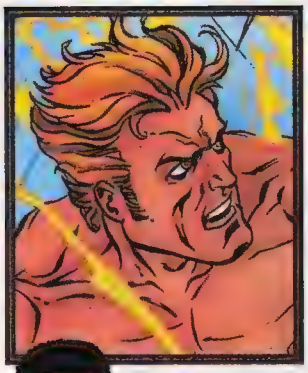
JASON GEDRICK as NIGHTWING

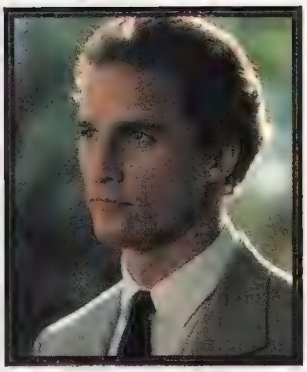
Brash young actor Jason Gedrick (TV's "Murder One") took on bad guys in "Iron Eagle" and faced dangerous situations in "Backdraft." We're sure he can champion good as team leader and former Bat-sidekick Nightwing.



MATTHEW McCONAUGHEY as FLASH

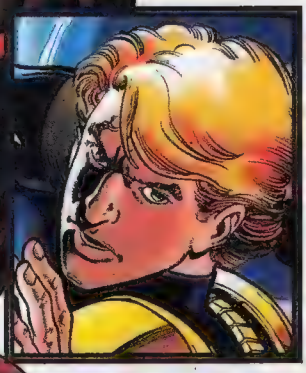
Whadda ya need, a road map? Flash doesn't. If he gets lost, he'll find another route before ya even blink. Matthew McConaughey displayed that kinda determination in "Contact," earning the nod from us.





FRED SAVAGE as TEMPEST

Every good team needs a water-controlling member. Fred Savage (TV's "Working") could easily fit the bill as Aquaman's former side-kick Tempest.

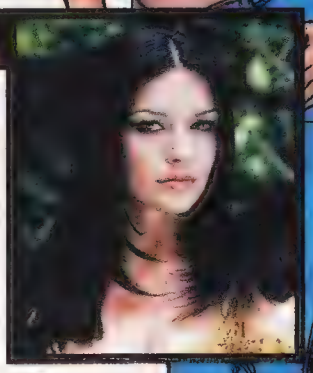


CASPER VAN DIEN as ARSENAL

Casper Van Dien ("Starship Troopers") might be quick to take charge, but his quick temper doesn't always make him the best team player. We'd say that description fits Arsenel to a "T."

CATHERINE ZETA JONES as AVATAR (DONNA TROY)

Donna Troy can kick your ass and look great doing it. Catherine Zeta Jones ("Mask of Zorro") should have no problem delivering on both counts. And, hey, she's got a great Mediterranean look going—perfect for an Amazon.



ANGELINA JOLIE as ARGENT

Angelina Jolie ("Gia") can really light up a room. She's perfect for Argent, the well-bred Italian daughter of a possible Mafioso who can generate and manipulate light to her heart's content.

HEATHER GRAHAM as JESSE QUICK

We could listen to sultry siren Heather Graham ("Lost in Space") read the telephone directory. So continually reciting the speed equation "3X2(9YZ)4A" might be tolerable if this "Boogie Nights" star is the one doing it.

REBECCA GAYHEART as STARFIRE

Rebecca Gayheart ("Urban Legend") always looks like a deer caught in headlights. Well, if you were an escaped alien slave girl and ex-Nightwing girlfriend called Starfire, you might look like that, too.

MICHAEL JAI WHITE as CYBORG

Gruff, tuff, buff and full of cybernetics. That's the Titans' half-man, half-machine Cyborg. Actor Michael Jai White ("Spawn") has shown he's got plenty of that. (Except for the cybernetics, that is.)

JOSHUA JACKSON as DAMAGE

Joshua Jackson proves he's a team player on TV's "Dawson's Creek." He'll do the same here. (And to make it even more of a match, Damage will trade his floppy 'do for Josh's spikey locks in the new *Titans* series.)

QUIET ON THE SET!

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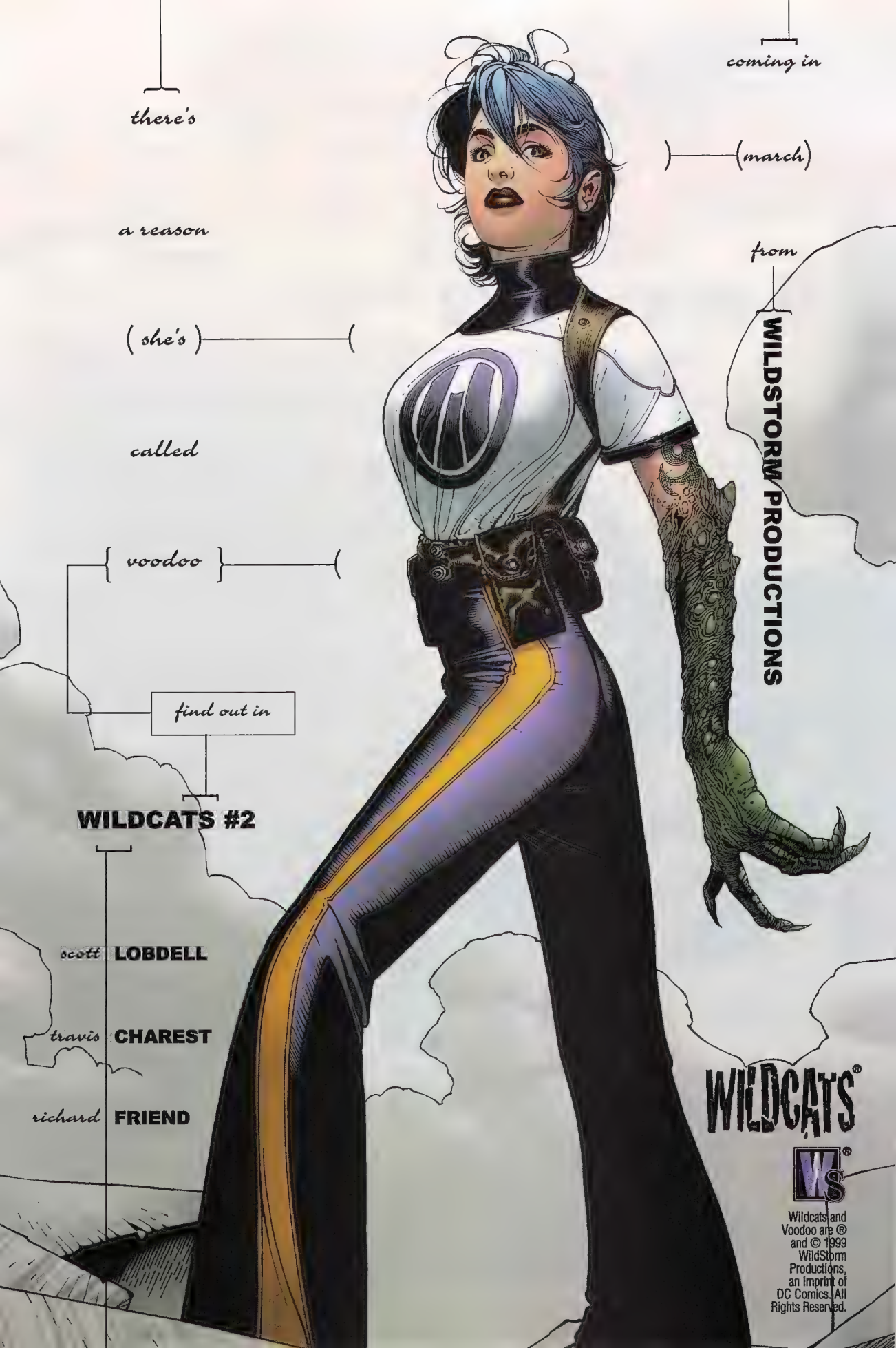
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'X-MEN': DEAD?

Executives concerned about storyline

"The X-Men" might never make it to the big screen.

If director **Bryan Singer** ("The Usual Suspects," "Apt Pupil") has his way, the motion picture will arrive as currently scheduled in the summer of 2000. Unfortunately for fans eagerly awaiting the premiere, production could slow down because the suits at 20th Century Fox aren't so sure Singer has the right corporate vision for the film.

"When I talk to the executives about 'X-Men,'" Singer says, "they're like, 'Well, we're concerned about talk and these scenes when you just have two men,' and I'm like, 'You don't understand—the best Bond films were the ones with all that conversation and all that relationship stuff and then some action happened, in spurts, but you cared.'"

Word in Hollywood is that Marvel's Stan Lee is also butting heads with the studio over similar issues—basically, trying to keep "The X-Men" from becoming a lame film designed only to sell merchandise.

That doesn't mean the film will forego action; Singer's take on the project covers all the bases, from superhero slugfests to dealing with discrimination. "'The X-Men' is a very special-effects-intensive movie [with a] big budget," he reveals. "It's been the No. 1 comic book in the world for 15 years, the No. 1 animated series in America for about five years. It's a really wonderful story about unlikely and reluctant superheroes, blessed—or cursed, if you will—with these powers. They experience a lot of prejudice and [it's about] them learning to defend a world that might condemn them. It's a really interesting franchise."

So interesting that, according to Singer, Fox is willing to spend "somewhere between $70 to $90 million" to bring the story of the "children of the atom" to the big screen.

And although Singer insists that no actors have been signed, he does reveal that there are a few front-runners for the roles of Professor Xavier, Wolverine, Storm and Rogue.

"I had lunch with **Patrick Stewart** and we talked about [him playing Professor X]. He's interested, but I haven't gone out to actors yet because there's no script yet," Singer says.

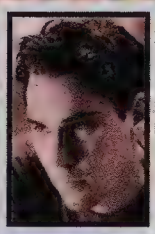
Rumor has it that Stewart has been offered $7 million to join the cast, and Australian **Russell Crowe** ("L. A. Confidential") is looking at playing Wolverine for a $5 million payday. Other names in contention are **Angela Bassett** ("Strange Days") as Storm, **Sarah Michelle Gellar** (TV's "Buffy the Vampire Slayer") as Rogue, **Edward Norton** ("Rounders") as Cyclops and **Julianne Moore** ("The Lost World")

EATING CROWE Reportedly, Russell Crowe has been offered the role of Wolverine in "X-Men."

Russell Crowe courtesy the Everett Collection

FACTS & FACES

CLOSE UP BRYAN SINGER



BRYAN SINGER, 32, practically exploded on the movie scene with 1995's suspenseful thriller "The Usual Suspects." The director/producer followed up in 1998 with the Stephen King adaptation, "Apt Pupil." His latest project is directing Marvel's mutant members in a live-action "X-Men" film.

as Jean Grey, but no casting is officially confirmed at this point.

Despite the tentative status of casting, Singer has been doing his homework, looking for advice from the best in the business. "I'm very excited about it," he says. "I visited the set of 'Titanic' down in Mexico when they were shooting, and I went to the set of 'Star Wars' in London, which was a neat experience. I've talked a lot with Lucas, Spielberg and Cameron, as well as with the heads of all these special-effects companies who have done an enormous amount of research. So I am really looking forward to being able to expand my imagination and make a great film." ■ **JENNY PETERS**

'STAR WARS: EPISODE 1' WATCH

Countdown to 'Star Wars: Episode 1—The Phantom Menace'

While attending a film producers conference in Sydney, Australia last November, **George Lucas** made the stunning announcement that he would film the two remaining prequels at the new Fox Studios there. With each film budgeted at $120 million, the two prequels would have the distinction of being the most expensive productions in Australian film history. Pre-production on "Episode Two" is scheduled to start in October '99, and filming should begin in April 2000 for a planned 2002 release date. The third installment would then begin production in the Land Down Under in 2003. Lucas also hinted that he might direct the remaining two films, although he wouldn't rule out the possibility that another director might be hired.

BY GEORGE! Lucas has hinted he might direct the remaining two prequels.

George Lucas © 1999 Paramount Pictures, MPTV All Rights Reserved

Meanwhile, while posters are up and trailers are now showing in theaters, post-production continues on the first film. With more than 2,000 special effects to be inserted into the film (including the CGI characters Jar Jar, Jabba the Hutt, Watto and Sebulba), the computers and their operators at ILM will be working around-the-clock until early May. There are reports that a major character from "The Phantom Menace" won't return in the remaining episodes. Take that as you wish, since no one inside Lucasfilm is talking, and exactly which character that will be will have to remain a mystery until May 21. ■ **PATRICK SAURIOL**

MARVELOUS THRILL RIDES

Hulk and Dr. Doom star in pre-ride movie

HULK SMASH! And he'll take you for a ride, too.

With great power comes great responsibility. So is the feeling at Olive Jar Studios, a Boston-based production company producing pre-show attractions for the new Universal Studios Islands of Adventure theme park in Orlando, Fla. A section of the park, opening this spring, will be dedicated to the Marvel Universe and will contain an "Incredible Hulk Coaster" and a "Doctor Doom Fear Fall."

Olive Jar will animate the sequences seen while waiting in line, according to Matthew Charde, executive producer for the project. "They tell a story and get you excited about the rides while also telling you to buckle your seat belt, if you're pregnant don't ride, etc."

Running roughly 15 minutes, the Hulk sequence is described as a graphically exciting, fierce piece. Doom's intro is more of a story, describing how the Fear Fall is a ride that sucks terror from its participants, using the emotion to power itself.

Both pieces remain true to Marvel's heritage, using characters from the comics, including Betty Ross, Gen. "Thunderbolt" Ross and the Fantastic Four.

"Universal encouraged us to bring our attitude and adult-oriented edge to the characters and take it beyond the Saturday morning cartoon look," added Charde. ■ **ERIC MORO**

FACE FRONT Dr. Doom's animated short serves as an intro to his ride.

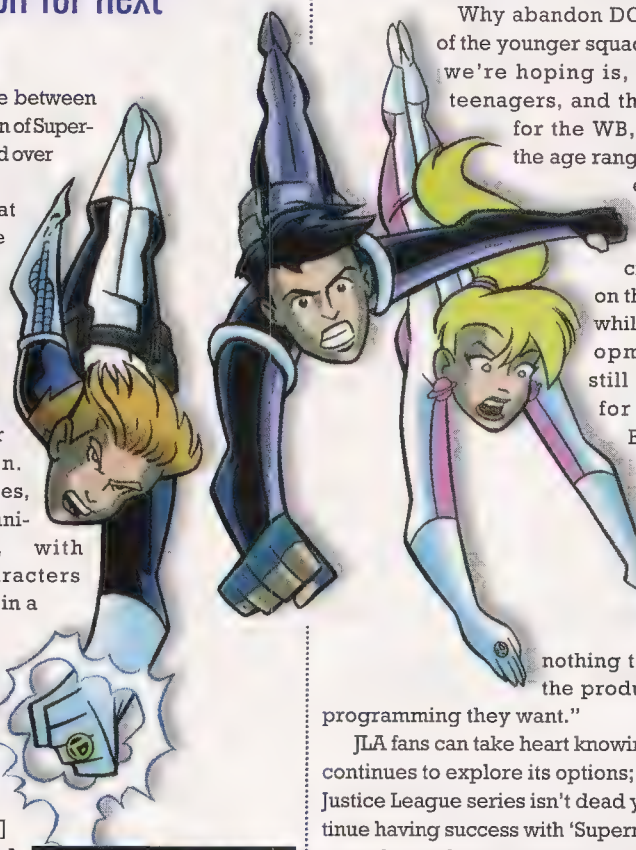
LEGION TRASHES JLA

Tough competition for next Kids' WB! show

In the head-to-head battle between DC superteams, the Legion of Super-Heroes has taken an early lead over the JLA.

Dispelling rumors that have run wild across the Internet, Warner Bros. Animation, the folks behind the mega-popular Batman and Superman animated series on Kids' WB!, recently confirmed that there are no plans for a Justice League cartoon. The Legion of Super-Heroes, however, *is* currently in animated development, with some of that team's characters already having appeared in a "Superman" episode.

"There is no JLA series, and I'm at fault for there being a discussion of it across the Internet," admits "Superman" producer Alan Burnett. "I mentioned at [Wizard's] Chicago convention that I was thinking of developing a JLA series, and I was at the time, but there got to be a problem with the rights. Since then, we've shifted things over to the Legion of Super-Heroes for a group show in development."



FUTURE TENSE The Legion is on course to be Kids' WB's next cartoon.

Why abandon DC's varsity team in favor of the younger squad? Demographics. "What we're hoping is, the characters are all teenagers, and that would be appealing for the WB," says Burnett. "Given the age range of most Saturday viewers, it should be a good fit."

Fans shouldn't run to circle the premiere date on their calendars, however; while the series is in development, the network can still pass. "We're shooting for next season," says Burnett. "We're writing material, and we're doing some art, and we'll show the powers that be what we have, and they'll make the final decision. It has nothing to do with the quality of the product, just with the mix of programming they want."

JLA fans can take heart knowing the Warner Bros. team continues to explore its options; the idea for an animated Justice League series isn't dead yet. "Someday, if we continue having success with 'Superman,' 'Batman' and all the superhero shows, someday 'JLA' will be done," says Burnett, "but just not right now. As for 'Legion,' we'll see if it ever happens." ■ **SCOTT BRICK**

IT'S A 'MYSTERY'

Bizarre superheroes head to the big screen

Bob Burden's strange vision of superheroes, "Mystery Men," has begun its journey to big-screen immortality. Shooting of the Universal Studios film version of the Dark Horse Comics series has begun in Los Angeles, with a projected release date of summer 1999.

It won't be your typical translation of comic book-to-Hollywood film, as actress **Claire Forlani** ("Meet Joe Black") explains. "It's about superhero losers. It's a comedy," she says with a laugh.

Much to her disappointment, Forlani doesn't get to play one of the losers. "I'm not one of the characters, one of the superhero leads. I'm the love interest," she says, "Mr. Furious' [**Ben Stiller**] love interest."

Despite Forlani's disappointment over not getting to play a superhero, she's certainly happy to be in the film. "It has a brilliant cast; it's really exciting," she says. "**Geoffrey Rush**—he's Cassanova Frankenstein—and Hank Azaria, Bill Macy, Janeane Garofalo, Lena Olin and Greg Kinnear. And Paul Reubens, that's the best! He plays the Spleen; he's toxic. It's going to be really fun, I think." ■ **JP**

CARROT TOP The Mystery Men head to the big screen—but Flaming Carrot isn't expected to appear.

TRAILERS...

'FINAL FANTASY' COMING: Based on the hit video games of the same name, "Final Fantasy: The Movie" is in development and planned for release in the summer of 2001. The film will be created using cutting-edge computer-animation software at the Honolulu production offices of Square Pictures. Written by Oscar-winning screenwriter Al Reinert ("Apollo 13"), the film's storyline is not based on any of the existing Final Fantasy games, although it will borrow on their cinematic style of storytelling.

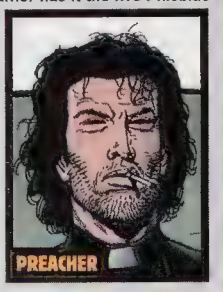
FINAL FANTASY

GENE RODDENBERRY'S RETURN: Even though the creator of "Star Trek" has been dead for a number of years, his legacy will live on with "Starship." A CGI series to be produced by Mainframe Entertainment ("ReBoot" and "Beast Wars"), the concept was conceived by Gene Roddenberry before his death. His widow, Majel Barrett Roddenberry, will executive produce the show, set aboard a huge spaceship exploring the cosmos.

'GHOSTING' IN THE WORKS: Hollywood usually options the rights to a comic book *after* it's been published, but not in this case. Former Malibu Comics chief Scott Rosenberg has sold the rights to his upcoming comic series *Ghosting* to Dimension Films. The film/comic follows the events of a vengeful ghost who haunts students at a college where bizarre initiation rituals take place. The comic series debuts from Platinum Studios next fall.

SOCK MONKEY SHORTS: Certainly not live from New York, it's a monkey and an alcoholic crow. Cartoonist Tony Millionaire, also the writer and artist for Dark Horse Comics' *Sock Monkey*, has seen his comic strip *Maakies* turned into an animated short for NBC's "Saturday Night Live." The 90-second short initially ran Sept. 26 and featured Uncle Gabby the monkey and his hard-drinking crow friend Drinky Crow from Millionaire's *Maakies*. Millionaire said "SNL" is making *Maakies* a semi-regular feature.

SHORT TAKES: Rumor has it the five Phlebiac brothers of the Violator may make a cameo in "Spawn 2."...Kevin Smith is now executive producing the "Preacher" movie but there's still no casting news....Neil Gaiman will executive produce a proposed "Books of Magic" film should everything come together. ...Kids' WB! plans to premiere "Batman Beyond" on Jan. 16, possibly in conjunction with the "Mad Love" episode of "Batman"...."Blade" debuts on DVD this month with added interviews of Stan Lee and *Wizard*'s own Gareb Shamus....Tim Truman's *Scout* comic is in the early stages of development as a movie....The new "Micronauts" CGI series has postponed its launch until fall '99....Thirteen episodes of a new "Twilight Zone" series are being developed for European broadcast....Shagadelic! "3rd Rock from the Sun"'s Kristen Johnston will play ex-KGB agent Ivana Humpalot in the second "Austin Powers" movie. ■ **PS AND GREG ORLANDO**


PREACHER

What do you do when you're abandoned on a planet across the galaxy from home?

Get a roommate!

Decoy™

NAB ONE FOR YOURSELF!

Arriving In Comics Shops March 1999.

Created and Pencilled by Courtney Huddleston
Written by Eli Williams

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BASIC TRAINING

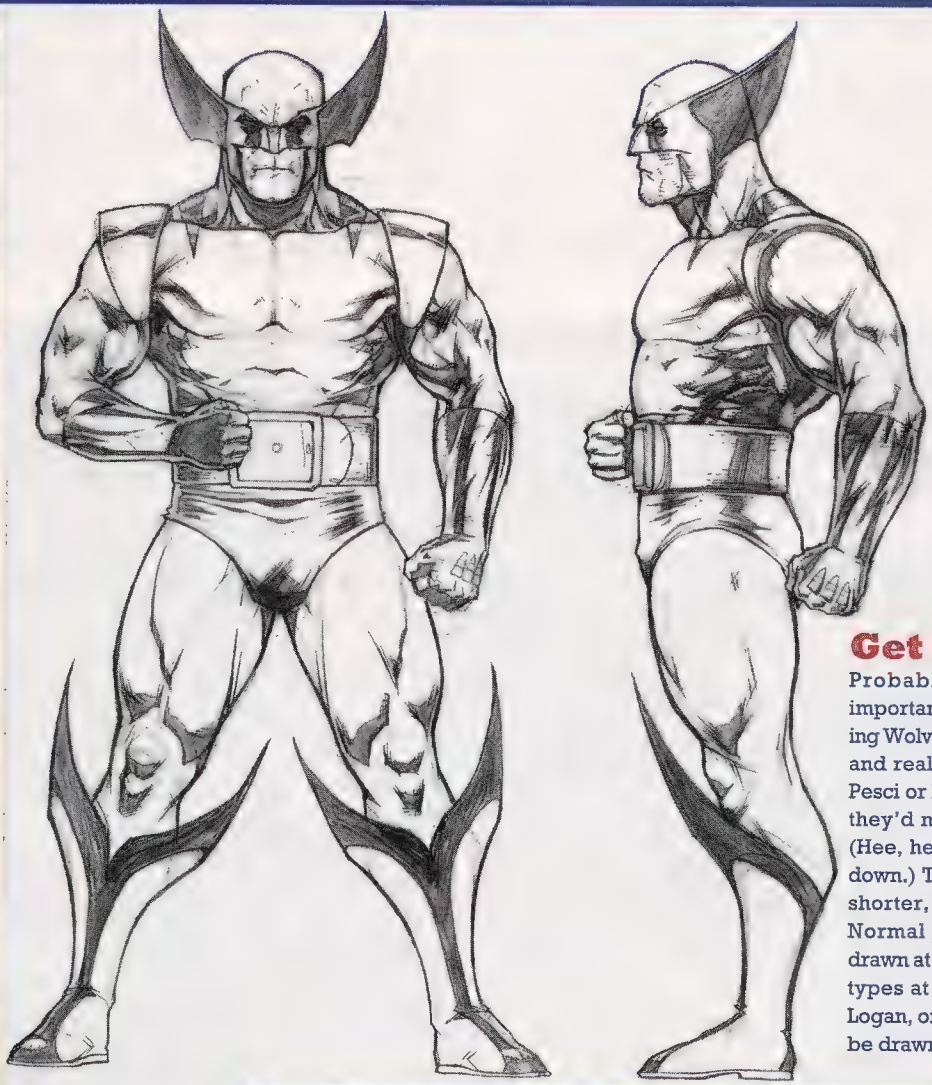
LEINIL FRANCIS YU SHOWS YOU

THIS MONTH'S SPECIAL INSTRUCTOR

HOW TO DRAW WOLVERINE

PHOTO: HOLLY STEIN

Hello there! I'm here to show you how to draw the toughest hero of all, some guy you might have heard of: WOLVERINE! Now, you're not going to learn how to draw biceps or a leg or an arm here. I hope you've already learned all the basics. Instead, I'm going to focus on Wolverine's unique qualities. Y'know, those things that make him stand out from the rest of the heroes, including his cool costume, design elements and killer attitude. So grab your pencils and get ready to rumble!



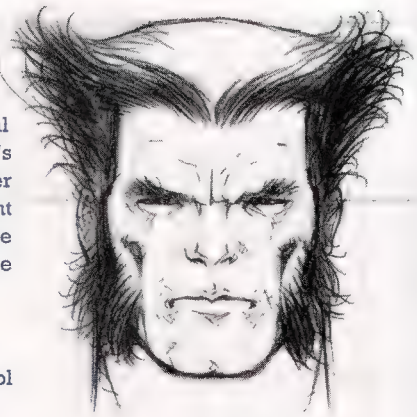
Get Shorty

Probably one of the most important elements in drawing Wolverine is that he's short and real bulky. Think of Joe Pesci or Danny Devito...now, they'd make a good Logan. (Hee, hee. Just joking. Calm down.) The point is, he has a shorter, stubbier structure. Normal people are usually drawn at 8 heads high. Heroic types at 8-1/2 or close to 9. Logan, on the other hand, can be drawn at 7-1/2.

He's also considerably wider. He's not a body builder, so you can give him a wide waistline. Call it a love handle or a slight potbelly. Most realistic artists do this, and it just looks great. (Guess that's what he gets for drinking all that beer.)

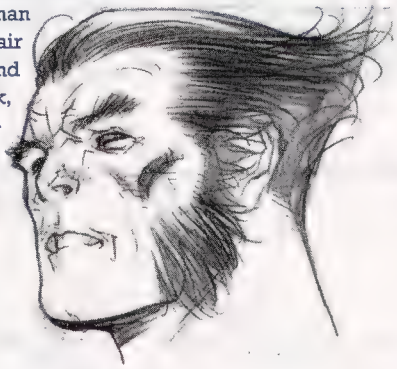
Face Front

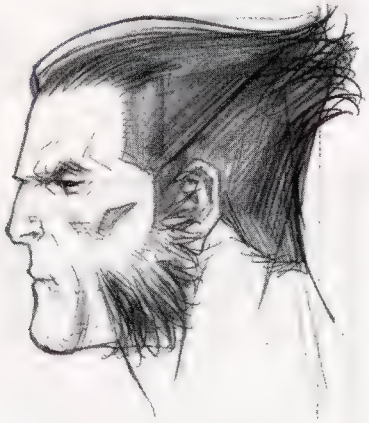
Wolverine's head is wider than other characters', so don't use the same template you would use to draw Spider-Man or Spawn. He's also not the typical good-looking guy. I recommend aging him a bit—I picture him in his 40s. He's the most experienced X-Man and it should show. His facial template is wider and more vertically compressed than others. Some facial features you might observe include a shorter nose bridge, thick eyebrows, a square jaw and some wrinkles here and there. Also, notice that his neck is drawn straight down like a trapezoid or triangle to suggest stability and firmness.



Hair Raising

The most recognizable feature of Logan (next to his claws, of course) is his cool hairstyle. If you get this right, you'll probably get away with everything else. Just think of a man falling face-down from a building. Well, Logan looks like that man all the time! He sports jet-black hair with fly-aways that extend above and behind his ears—just like his mask, only shorter. He also has overgrown sideburns that you can extend to his cheek bones.



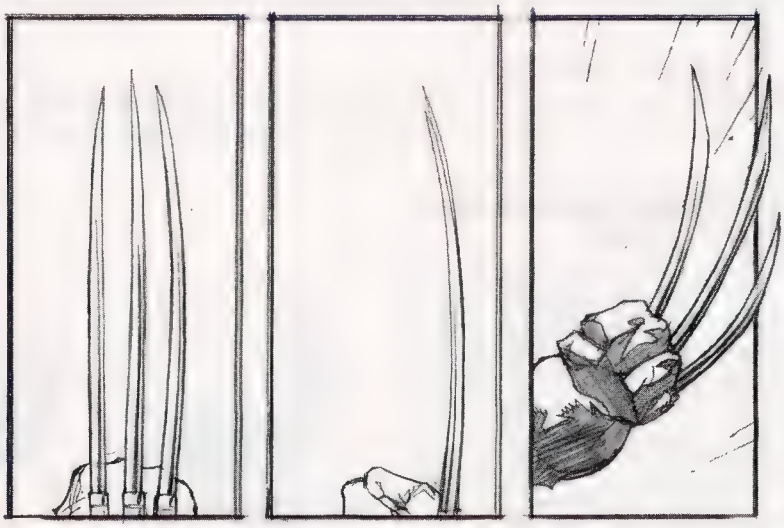


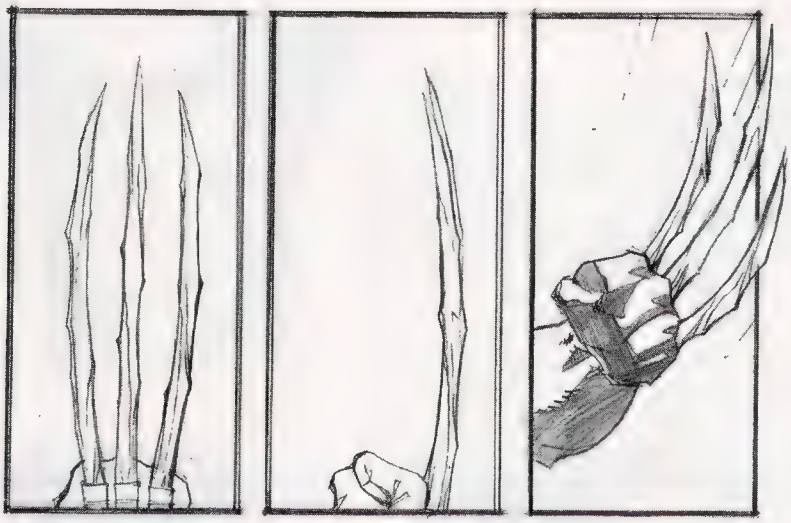
The Mask

Wolvie has one of the coolest masks in comicdom and I always have fun drawing it. Over the years, there have been many variations, but I prefer the wide-winged variety. I use the eyebrow as my guide for the forehead part of the blue section of the mask, then stretch it out and above for the wing part. So the bluish wing part starts from the nose, runs along the eyebrows then upward to the tip.

Snikt!

Now that's a sound I haven't heard for a looong time. I know you've been aching to see them, so for my demonstration I've given Wolverine back his adamantium claws! Now, there are two ways artists draw these things: the tube-like blades and the knife-like flat blades. I prefer drawing them like oval tubes with a sharp edge on the lower side. Imagine the cross-section of an inverted tear-drop.





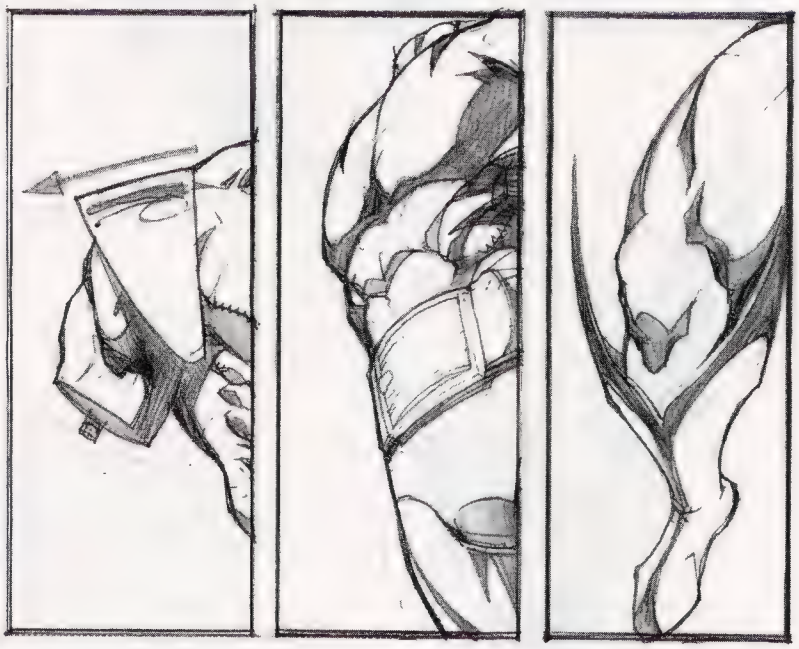
Shluck!

Now, Wolverine artists have come up with different interpretations of his current bone claws. Jagged, smooth, round, etc. I prefer drawing them rough and jagged, simply to suggest toughness and durability. Yeah, human bones are smooth, but comics is a visual medium so we need to visually suggest things. These bones can cut through rocks so they should look tougher than rocks. Experiment and see what works for you!

The Clothes

Wolverine's costume is actually quite simple and can be broken down into a few parts. The metal shoulder pads are about one-half to three-fifths of a head wide and can be drawn upward or parallel to the shoulders. I prefer the latter for design purposes. It's important to maintain a smooth flow of lines. Note: Make sure you draw the shoulder first before laying over the shoulder pads.

The war paint on his body presumably is for camouflage, but seems to me it's really more for design purposes. It's found on his shoulders and ribcage. I tend to minimize the size and only extend it about one-third of a head from the collar bone.



Buckle Up

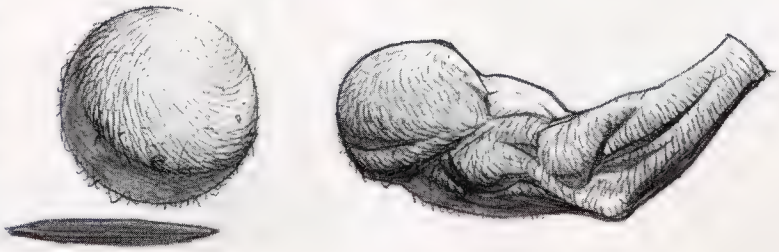
Wolvie's belt is huge and heavy. It runs about one-half a head in width, from his lower abdomen to the navel. It's leather, so make sure you render it as such.

Boot Camp

Wolvie's boots are pretty tricky. They have wing-like flaps just like the mask, and the tips are colored black, which runs down to the tip of the toes. You'll find the same thing for the back—right down to his heels.

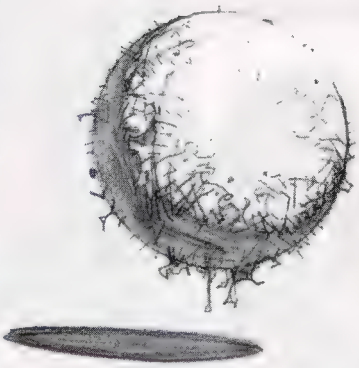
Hair ball

Logan has hair all over his body. Hair should be treated just like all design elements. There are two important things to remember. First, you should observe light sources and highlights—draw more hair on the darker side and less on the highlight. It makes the drawing more solid and three-dimensional. Second, it should conform to the contour of the body, or else you destroy the structure.



Rough Rider

Now, this my favorite part. Logan looks best at his worst. He looks cooler when he's roughed up with dirt, torn clothes and scars all over. I take advantage of every opportunity to rough him up and make him look as if he's been in the middle of a nuclear explosion as often as possible. Again, the rules for body hair apply here. If you look at the ball to the left, it's roughed up quite a bit, but still conforms to the shape of a sphere. Practice with simple shapes until you're ready to rough Logan himself up.



Aaaaaaaaargh!

Now you're ready for your pinup. This is what it all comes down to: A cool shot of Wolverine about to rip some bad guys to shreds. But before we start, there are a few things to remember. Have him fight bad guys in a cool environment: a dark alley-way, an abandoned warehouse, a thick forest or a country such as France...basically any place you wouldn't want to go to (hee, hee). Avoid drawing him in a proper, upright standing position unless he is in civilian clothing (or Logan mode). Have him stooped down or crouched for that added savage, animalistic element.

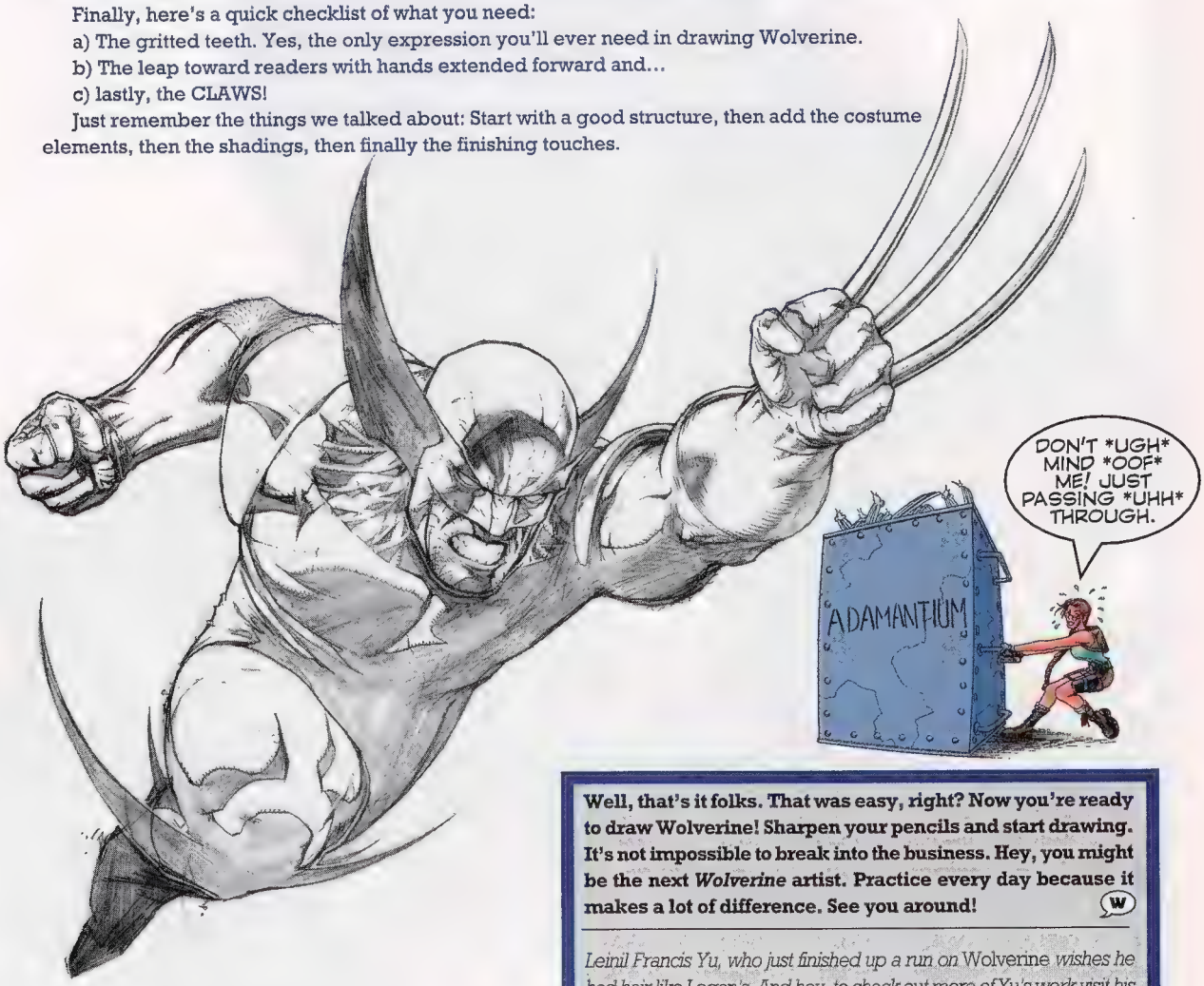
Finally, here's a quick checklist of what you need:

a) The gritted teeth. Yes, the only expression you'll ever need in drawing Wolverine.

b) The leap toward readers with hands extended forward and...

c) lastly, the CLAWS!

Just remember the things we talked about: Start with a good structure, then add the costume elements, then the shadings, then finally the finishing touches.



Well, that's it folks. That was easy, right? Now you're ready to draw Wolverine! Sharpen your pencils and start drawing. It's not impossible to break into the business. Hey, you might be the next *Wolverine* artist. Practice every day because it makes a lot of difference. See you around!

Leinil Francis Yu, who just finished up a run on Wolverine *wishes he had hair like Logan's. And hey, to check out more of Yu's work visit his home page at: www.pworld.net.ph/user/leinilyu/.*

The Ultimate Team-up!
TOP COW
CORE
EIDOS
INTERACTIVE
MICHAEL TURNER

WIZARD #1/2 OFFER

Chinatown, New York. Wing Phat, thief and assassin extraordinaire, has gone underground after stealing Old Man Morolto's demon gem from Lara Croft. Croft has followed his trail of death through back alleys and secret temples, and can draw only one conclusion: Wing Phat is a demon now, and he's hungry for blood. Fortunately, Lara has an ally in New York: Sara Pezzini of the New York City Police Department's Homicide Division and wielder of the Witchblade. Together they must stop the demon Wing Phat before he unleashes his ultimate power. And don't forget Old Man Morolto. He wants his gem back, and this time he's ready for Croft and Pezzini.

Everybody's favorite comic book heroine and video game star team up again in this exclusive *Wizard*-only story that's a must-have for fans of these two hot properties. So hurry up and fill out the order form below, throw in your $3 and mail it in early before they're all gone. With two names like those in one special #1/2 offer, these comics aren't gonna last too long!

Within the Witchblade/Tomb Raider #1/2, you'll find these goodies:

- A brand-new story written by Michael Turner and Bill O'Neil!
- An exclusive cover by everybody's favorite artist, Michael Turner!
- An exclusive behind-the-scenes sketchbook look at the making of this hot comic!
- And the most magical morsel of all—this is a Witchblade/Tomb Raider story you won't find anywhere else! This exclusive comic is available through this one-time Wizard offer only!

Don't delay! A comic this good won't stay around for too long. Miss it now and it's gone forever!

SARA AND LARA'S LAW

No reproductions of this coupon will be accepted. This coupon must be sent in the accompanying envelope. With this coupon, you can order two comics. You may put additional coupons in the same envelope. Remit by check or money order only. Canadian orders remit $4.00 per copy, other foreign orders remit $6.00 per copy. All payment must be in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank. Make all checks payable to Wizard Entertainment. Offer good only while supply lasts. Please allow eight-to-12 weeks from date of expiration for delivery. Changes of address will not be forwarded unless Wizard Entertainment is notified in writing by April 2, 1999.

THIS OFFER EXPIRES APRIL 2, 1999

Drawing BOARD

Who needs the pros? This is the show for WIZARD READERS' ART

When DC threw all its characters into the future with the DC "One Million" event, we wanted to go along. But the rat bastards wouldn't let us. At least not until we came up with a cool cover for *Wizard*. That's where you stepped up, drafting some possible covers for us. And they look like a million bucks. In appreciation, this month's grand-prize winner receives an original page of art from the *DC One Million* mini-series, the four issues of that mini-series signed by Grant Morrison and Val Semeiks, plus every DC title that tied-in—nearly every book in the DC Universe! Honorable mention folks will get some stuff, too. Watch your mailbox!

GRAND-PRIZE WINNER

THIS ONE CAUGHT OUR EYE

BATGIRL

MARIO RUIZ, Jackson Heights, N.Y.

THE BOOTY

THE BIG THREE
Andy Bui, Vienna, Va.

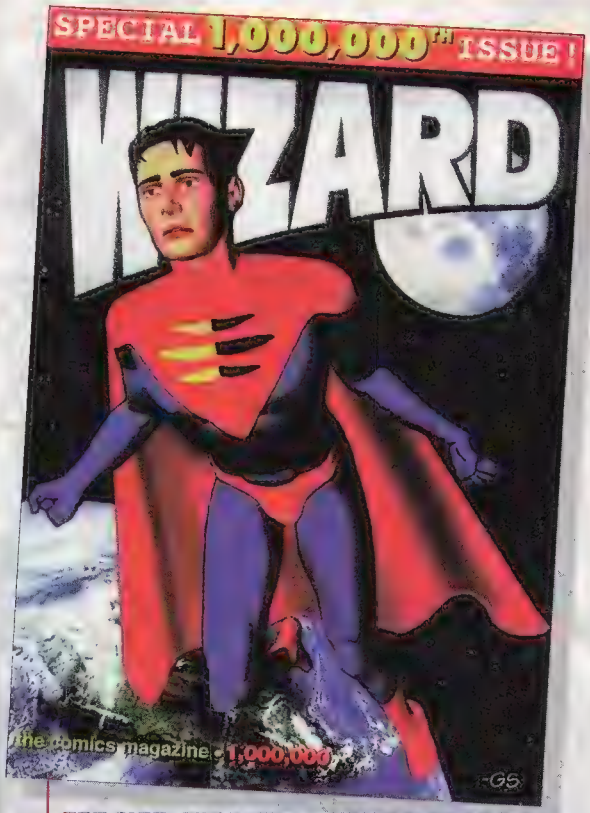
JOKER'S DELIGHT
Robert Villazante, Safford, Ariz.

FLASH TO THE FUTURE
Jean-Sebastien Giroux,
Bois-Des-Filion, Quebec, Canada

HEX MARKS THE SPOT
Travis Cook, Saginaw, Texas

HERE COMES BLACKHAWK

Steven Taylor, New Orleans, La.



HIGH-FLYIN' SUPERMAN

Gary Soechting, New Braunfels, Texas

ENVIRONMENTALIST HEROES

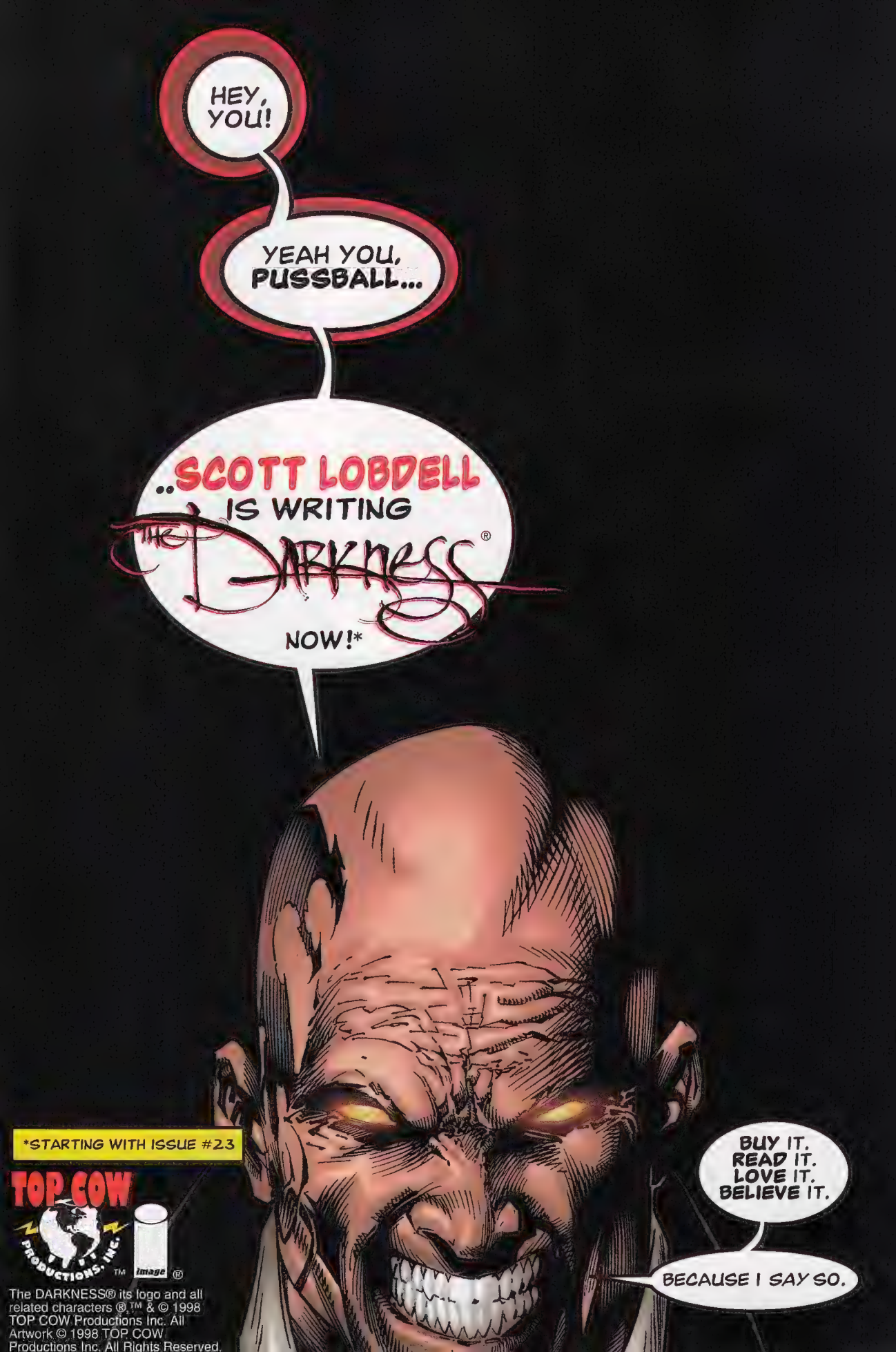
Trent Sagunsky, Neenah, Wis.

Want your art to appear on one of these four pages in future issues? Think you've got what it takes? (Hey—quality *and* originality count, y'know.) Then send your "Drawing Board" entries to:

SUBMIT

Drawing Board
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

And follow these rules or else: Use any form of unlined paper or posterboard (no larger than 8 inches by 11 1/4 inches) and any medium (oils, crayon, mustard, etc.—but not neon inks). Put your name, full address and TELEPHONE NUMBER on the back of your piece, and mail it flat to avoid damage. **You must also include a color photo of yourself.** All entries are nonreturnable and become the property of Wizard Entertainment. Employees of Wizard Entertainment are the sole judges of the contests, and all decisions are final. Got it? All right, good luck!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YEAH YOU, PUSSBALL...
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*STARTING WITH ISSUE #23
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ART CONTEST

ONI PRESS, GRAPHITTI DESIGNS AND VIEW ASKEW PRESENT:

Spend the Holidays with Jay and Silent Bob!

PHOTO: LAUREN MITCHELL

PRIZES

GRAND PRIZE (1): One Mallrat wins all three videos in Kevin Smith's New Jersey trilogy: "Mallrats," "Clerks" and "Chasing Amy." Plus, he'll win a set of the San Diego Expo limited-edition Jay and Silent Bob action figures and the San Diego Expo version variant cover comics signed by Smith (a.k.a. Silent Bob) and Jason Mewes (a.k.a. Jay), *Clerks: The Comic Book* (first print), *Oni Double Feature* #1 (first print), *Jay & Silent Bob* #1 first-print photo cover, *Jay & Silent Bob* #1 first-print variant cover by Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, a Jay and Silent Bob T-shirt drawn by Matt Wagner, a Jay and Silent Bob T-shirt drawn by Duncan Fegredo and a *Clerks: The Comic Book* T-shirt drawn by Jim Mahfood.

FIRST PRIZE (2): Two clerks each win one of the three Kevin Smith videos, *Clerks: The Comic Book* (first print) signed by Kevin Smith and Jim Mahfood, a set of regular edition Jay and Silent Bob action figures, a set of limited variant *Jay & Silent Bob* #1 comics and a *Clerks: The Comic Book* T-shirt.

THIRD PRIZE (5): Five Amy chasers each win one of the three Kevin Smith videos, *Jay & Silent Bob* #1 (first print) signed by Kevin Smith and Jason Mewes and a Jay and Silent Bob T-shirt drawn by Duncan Fegredo.

It's holiday time and Jay and Silent Bob are invited over to your house for dinner. The only thing is, they want to dress up for the holidays. What we want you to do is draw Jay and Silent Bob in their best holiday attire. Draw them wearing Santa suits, reindeer horns, a yarmulke, whatever. Make it holiday-themed and way-cool. Put them around a Christmas tree, a menorah, in the snow, wherever. Then, fill out the entry form below, attach it to the back of your drawing and send it all in to us and we'll choose the best and most creative entries as the winners and feature their art in a future issue of *Wizard*. Also, be sure to include two photos of yourself with the entry. Each photo (no Polaroids, please) should include your full name, date of birth, telephone number and address on the back.

Just keep these things in mind as you start drawing: Submissions can be on any form of unlined paper or posterboard and can be in any medium (oils, crayon, marker, etc.). Neon inks will not print. Artwork must not be larger than 8"x 11 1/4". Do not fold, bend or roll artwork. Mail flat.

CONTEST IS ONLY OPEN TO THOSE 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.

PRIZES FOR THIS CONTEST PROVIDED BY ONI PRESS, GRAPHITTI DESIGNS, VIEW ASKEW AND SNOOTCHIE BOOTCHIES EVERYWHERE!

DOWN WITH THE LAW

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, Oni Press, Graphitti Designs, View Askew, their immediate families and Apu, the head clerk from the Kwik-E-Mart in Springfield, USA. The contest is only open to those 18 years old or older. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, e-mail address and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "Spend the Holidays with Jay and Silent Bob!" Art Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries and all rights thereto become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 26, 1999.** Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Winners will be selected based on originality and creativity by Wizard Entertainment. Warning: Playing roller hockey on the roof of a store is not a good idea. It looks really cool, but it can be dangerous–a public service announcement from your friends at *Wizard*. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than April 2, 1999. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. But if you do play hockey on the roof, bring more than one ball. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Winning entries will be selected on or about March 12, 1999.

For a list of winners, available after March 12, 1999, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "Spend the Holidays with Jay and Silent Bob!" Art Contest Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

ENTER NOW!

Fill this out, attach your entry and put it in an envelope. Send it to:

"Spend the Holidays with Jay and Silent Bob" Art Contest,
c/o Wizard Entertainment,
P.O. Box 118,
Congers, NY 10920-0118

"Spend the Holidays with Jay and Silent Bob!" Art Contest Entry Form

CONTEST DEADLINE FEBRUARY 26, 1999!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____ E-mail Address _____

DID YOU ATTACH YOUR ENTRY AND PHOTOS?

TOY CHEST

FATHOM IT!

Hubba hubba! Moore Action Collectibles is set to launch Top Cow Series 2—technically the follow-up to the **Witchblade** line—in spring 1999, headlined by the first-ever **Fathom** action figure. If that wasn't enough to get a gaggle of toy fans drooling, sexy *Fathom* star Aspen Matthews is joined by *Witchblade* heroine **Sara Pezzini** in her infamous red Versace micro-dress and a bare-chested **Ian Nottingham.**

In a move that will have many fans happy, M.A.C. and ace sculptor Clayburn Moore have decided to add quite a few extras to these figures. Fathom will be available in three variants, each with a different undersea creature and a different snap-on weapon. Sara comes with a removable head that can be replaced with a noggin sportin' her fully armored look, while Nottingham can be modified with snap-on Witchblade armor and a long sword.

M.A.C. seems to be on the warpath in '99, with a ton of eagerly awaited toy lines planned. Aside from an entire line devoted to Fathom, fans can look for toys for the Darkness, another possible Witchblade assortment, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Darkchylde, Vampirella and figures from the animated Heavy Metal movie "F.A.K.K. 2," starring B-movie queen Julie Strain. Hubba hubba, indeed.

BLOCKS AND FIGURE PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHIRALDI

TITANIC THREE If you're expecting (from left) Sara Pezzini, Fathom and shirtless Ian Nottingham to do a Three Stooges routine, you're out of luck.

BY TOM PALMER JR.

Spawn gets glassy...Marv's not very classy...and the Force is still with us!

WRASSLEMANIA Get in the cage, punk, with Kevin Nash, Sting and Randy "Macho Man" Savage.

WCW TOY THUNDER

Toy Biz is throwing everything but the kitchen sink into its WCW/NWO Smash 'n Slam toys, including authentic accessories, signature action features and lots of surprises.

The line kicks off with three assortments, all hitting stores in January. The first figures on tap are **Sting**, the Giant with Rey Mysterio Jr., Diamond Dallas Page and **Lex Luger**. The second batch includes Hollywood Hulk Hogan, **Randy Savage**, **Kevin Nash** and Scott Hall, while the wrestler/phenomenon known as Goldberg gets his own assortment.

Wanna know what kind of extras you can look forward to? Here's a taste: Sting sports a cloth trench coat and a baseball bat and can recreate his "Stinger Splash" move. To complement his Chair Slamming Action, Macho Man Randy Savage naturally totes his very own folding chair. Kevin Nash comes with a referee sidekick figure and can duplicate the real Nash's "Jackknife Power Bomb" move, while Lex Luger has a breakaway police barricade and can perform his "Torture Rack" maneuver.

These figures are just the tip of the iceberg next year from Toy Biz. Plans are already underway for future assortments, and there's also the possibility of a 12-inch line.

WCW FIGURE PHOTOS BY PAUL SCHRALLO

McFARLANE'S SIN–SATION

McFarlane Toys kicks off a line of action figures made exclusively for the direct comic book market with Marv, everybody's favorite big lug from Frank Miller's *Sin City*. Marv is painted in subtle gray tones (to reflect his black-and-white comic roots) with touches of red and a ton of accessories. This 6-inch, fully-articulated toy stands on a special diorama base and is equipped with a pistol, hacksaw, hatchet, gas can and a spare hand that holds the decapitated head of artist Geof Darrow. Guess that kinda puts the kibosh on Miller and Darrow's follow-up to the comic *Hard Boiled*.

Future direct market figures from McFarlane will include Joseph Michael Linsner's Dawn and J. Scott Campbell's Danger Girl.

MARVELOUS Tongue in cheek and head in hand, Marv is off to kick some butt.

PLEXIGLAS PESTILENCE Spawn and pals come encased in Plexiglas containers.

SPAWN IN A FISHTANK

Glub glub, it looks like Spawny-guy's going for a swim.

Actually, what looks like a tiny fish tank is actually a special Plexiglas case designed to show off some brand-new exclusive Spawn figures. On sale now at special retail outlets, these Plexiglas-encased toys feature familiar Spawn figures with new accessories, play features or paint jobs. Spiked Spawn, with a new arm and head is out at Target stores, Spawn III, with a new rubber cape is at Kay-Bee stores, the elephant Poacher packs a new gun and paint job at all FAO Schwarz outlets, Manga Goddess sports a new metallic paint scheme at Wal-Mart and Manga Spawn has new colors and new armor pieces at Toys R Us stores.

WISH LIST

THE 10 FIGURES THAT WIZARD WANTS TO SEE MADE

1) **BATTLE CHASERS** With WildStorm and Cliffhanger Productions making a move under the DC umbrella, fans could soon have an answer to their prayers for Battle Chasers toys. Serve up a Red Monika toy in any form and action figure fans will go nuts.

2) **THUNDERBOLTS** You know the formula: T-Bolt team members packed with their villainous alter-egos. And now that Hawkeye's a member of the team, there's even more reason for Toy Biz to make these figure.

3) **SOUTH PARK** Foul-mouthed kids the world over want one thing and one thing only–South Park action figures, complete with sound chips and cool action features.

4) **BASTION** What's the harm in one more action figure of an evil mutant? Bastion has gotta be the next great X-Men character to get the plastic treatment, along with a special Nimrod sidekick figure.

5) **JADE** The latest Person to wear a Green Lantern power ring, Jade would make a perfect complement to the Kyle Rayner and Parallax action figures. And with snap-on energy blasts, this figure would be enough to take on anything thrown her way.

6) **LOIS LANE** Nothing beats the animated versions of DC characters, and nothing would beat a Lois Lane figure in that sleek and sexy style. Throw in a mail-in offer for a Jimmy Olsen figure and this figure would be hotter than hot.

7) **ARSEFACE** With rumors of a Jesse Custer action figure in the works, why not go all the way and make good ol' Arseface. This disfigured figure would be a natural for all sorts of action features, including a garbled sound chip or a drooling action.

8) **IMPULSE** He's got his own monthly title and also stars in the comic *Young Justice*, so there's no excuse why we don't have an Impulse figure. Give this toy a special super-speed kicking action for that extra finishing touch.

9) **UATU THE WATCHER** There have been three Galactus figures already, so why no Watcher? Toy Biz needs to make chrome-domed Uatu that stands a foot tall with a real cloth tunic.

10) **ORION** Arguably the coolest New Gods character at DC, Orion would be an action figure hit. With an Astro Harness accessory and removable helmet, this figure would be a collector's dream.

Hey! Keep sending in your requests! You've already made a difference! Drop us a note with your "dream figures" at:

TOY WISH LIST
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920

Or e-mail us at:
WizardTGTC@aol.com

$5

Our **Exclusive!!** alternate cover to

MICHAEL TURNER'S #3

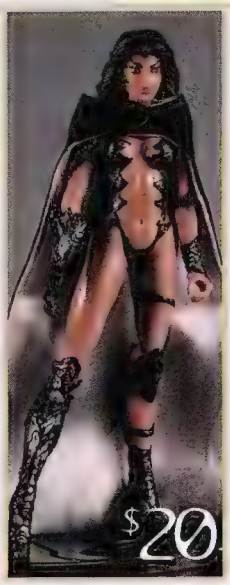
FATHOM

Only Marty's got it!

TOP COW PRODUCTIONS, INC.™

OBSIDIAN WITCHBLADE™

THE RAREST OF ALL THE WITCHBLADE ACTION FIGURES... AND SHE **GLOWS!**



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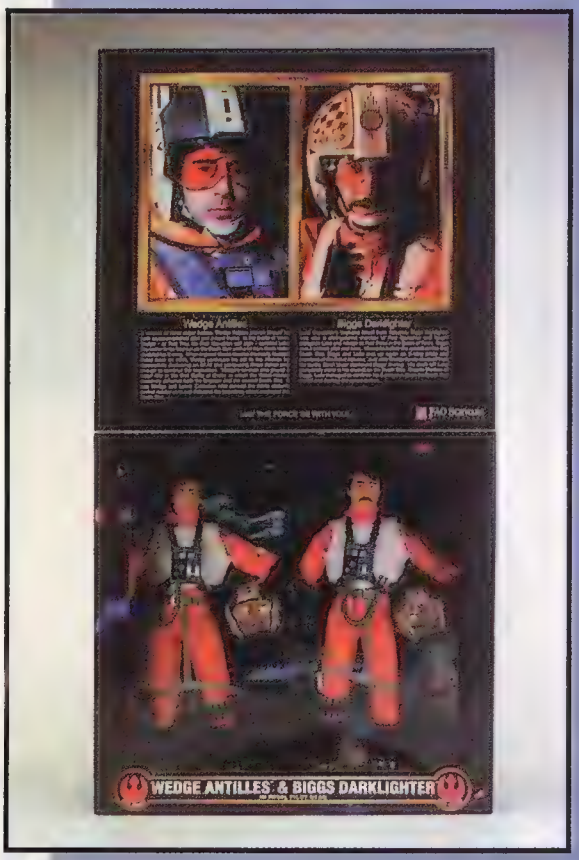
STAR WARS GETS BIG

What would a "Toy Chest" column be without some Star Wars news?

Hasbro recently unveiled a number of 12-inch Star Wars figures for the end of '98 that bring several fan-favorite characters to a larger action-figure format. You'll have to get your hunting caps on, though, 'cause all of these figures are available at different retail stores.

J.C. Penney's the place to go for the Empire Strikes Back 4-Pack, with **Luke Skywalker**, **Han Solo**, a Snowtrooper and an AT-AT Driver. Another multi-pack, the Hero Collection 3-Pack, with Han in Bespin gear, Luke in a Tatooine poncho and **Princess Leia** in Boushh disguise, is available at Kay Bee stores along with an electronic talking **Boba Fett**. Toys R Us also has an electronic figure, a two-pack with C-3P0 and R2-D2. FAO Schwarz has Wedge Antilles and Biggs Darklighter together in a set while Target offers up Han Solo in Carbonite block and an Emperor and Royal Guard two-pack. Finally, Wal-Mart has Wicket the Ewok, R2-D2 and R5-D4, each sold separately, while Service Merchandise serves up Leia in Hoth Gear.



USE OF FORCE (clockwise from left) Twelve-inch exclusive Star Wars toys are jumping to a galaxy near you. Wicket the Ewok, Empire Strikes Back 4-Pack, Hero Collection 3-Pack, C-3P0 and R2-D2, and Biggs Darklighter and Wedge Antilles.

STAR WARS PHOTOS COURTESY OF HASBRO

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stuff

COMIC BOOK MERCHANDISE YOU CAN BUY...

By David Borak and the *Wizard* Staff

AVAILABLE AT YOUR LOCAL COMICS RETAILER

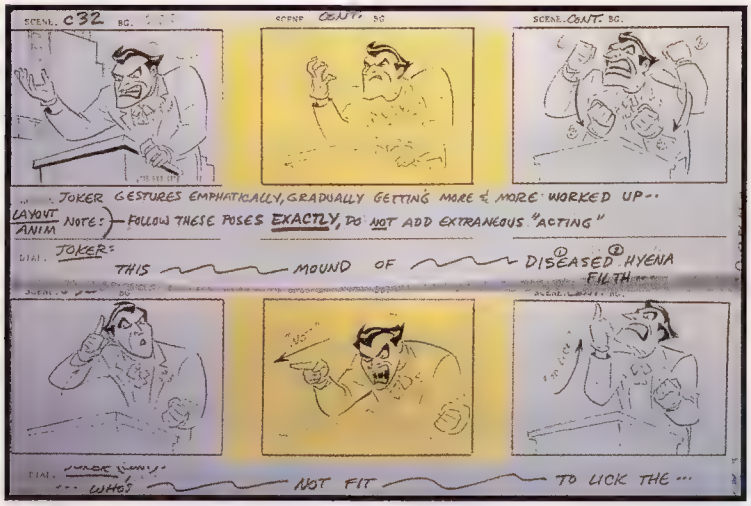
Who among us doesn't like stuff? Whether it's Nightcrawler's bait kit (now featuring live nichtcrawlers!), The Tick's Vermin-Be-Gone Insecticide or Pineapple Man's Freshly Squeezed Guava Juice set, we're all suckers for comic-related merchandise. Each month, *Wizard* will strive to show you the latest and super-neatest in comic book statues, posters, pins, magnets, shirts and other goodies.

In short, if it's cool, and if it's stuff, you'll find it here.

COMIC BOOKS

In stores now, look for two books from DC on Batman and Superman. First, DC Comics and HarperCollins present *Batman: Animated* the definitive book on the acclaimed "Batman" animated series ($50 hardcover, $25 trade paperback). Writer/producer of the show Paul Dini and designer Chip Kidd bring you a behind-the-scenes look at the "Batman" animated series through breathtaking photographs, never-before-published pre-production and finished artwork, and informative commentary on the show's development. Next, Chronicle Books brings you *Superman: The Complete History* ($29.95 hardcover). Writer Les Daniels and designer Chip Kidd present a complete history of Superman. *Superman: The Complete History* contains hundreds of examples of rare comic book art, interviews with writers and artists, working sketches and original character designs. This 192-page illustrated hardcover contains more than 200 color images.

WORLD'S FINEST BOOKS Cool behind-the-scenes art and interviews are loaded in both *Superman: The Complete History* (above) and *Batman: Animated* (left and below).



FINGER CORPS With this ring, I thee wed.

A GREENISH RING

No evil shall escape your sight with the Green Lantern Sterling Silver Symbol Ring from DC Comics ($79.95). Made of solid .925 sterling silver, this ring features the classic Green Lantern symbol inscribed multiple times along the band with a center symbol enlarged and encircled. The Green Lantern ring is available in sizes six through 13 (whole sizes only) and will be available in stores Feb. 17. Power batteries are not included.

TREKKING MODELS

ERTL celebrates its 50th anniversary as a model-kit manufacturer with a series of new Star Trek Model Kits. Look for highly detailed model kits of the U.S.S. Enterprise NCC-1701 versions B, C, and the "First Contact" E ($21.75 each). In addition, you'll find the SnapFast Enterprise set ($21.75), which contains only three pieces and is easy to assemble. Finally, keep an eye out for the Klingon Bird of Prey Plus Pack ($25) which comes with paint, a brush and glue to make it easier to create your Klingon starship. Each kit is available in retail and hobby stores everywhere, or call ERTL at (800) 553-4886.

WARP DRIVE ERTL's Star Trek models are out of this world.

CELLULAR CREEPITUDE

Simitar Entertainment presents two Chroma-Cels based on the popular anime series "Night Warriors: Darkstalkers." You can choose between the lovely succubus Morrigan posing seductively under a full moon or Felicia's "Pretty Cat Review" with numerous familiar characters hangin' on or around a text logo ($14.98 each). Each full-color, 8" X 10" Chroma-Cel comes with its own seal of authenticity printed on the front of the animation cel and an individually numbered certificate of authenticity on the back of the mat. Look for them this January at comic outlets.

SATURDAY NIGHT DEAD Meet the Darkstalkers, who want to have you over (fire) for dinner.

HOT STUFF!

PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

SPEEDY STATUE

On Feb. 24, DC Comics releases the Golden Age Flash Medium Statue ($79.95) featuring the original speedster, Jay Garrick! Sculpted by William Paquet and based on designs by artist Steve Rude, this 7-inch-tall cold-cast porcelain statue features Jay in motion mounted on a base inscribed with the moniker "The Flash." The Golden Age Flash Medium Statue is limited to 2,500 units.

SPEED GEEZER? Jay Garrick, the Golden Age Flash, goes porcelain.

LASER CUT HEROES

Laser Mach presents a series of Laser-MAT (Matted Art Transparencies) ready-to-frame reproductions of your favorite Marvel comic book covers. Each piece features a clear print of a comic cover which is double-matted and specially laser cut. Look for the Daredevil Laser-MAT featuring the cover to *Daredevil* #365 ($44), limited to 800 copies. You can also get a deluxe edition of the Daredevil Laser-MAT which is signed by Stan Lee and limited to only 200 copies ($150). You'll also find the Captain America Laser-MAT featuring the cover to *Captain America Annual* #8 and the Spider-Man Laser-MAT ($44 each) featuring the cover to *Peter Parker* #88. Both Cap and Spidey are limited to 500 pieces each. Each print is 10" X 16" and comes numbered with a certificate of authenticity. The Laser-MAT pieces are available only on the Laser Mach Web site at www.lasermach.com, or by calling (425) 485-3169.

LASER TAGGED Hey! Lasers are not just for blowing up Death Stars anymore! Now they make cool decorations for your wall–as well as being a tool for mass destruction.

stuff

CARDED! Pokémon get their own card game.

PLAYING POCKET MONSTERS

Based on the hit Nintendo game and animated series, *Pokémon* is now a collectible card game! Wizards of the Coast brings you the *Pokémon* CCG where you can become an aspiring Pokémon master by taming approximately 150 different "pocket monsters," each with its own unique abilities, that become champion fighters with different abilities. You can buy the *Pokémon* CCG preconstructed deck ($9.95) which comes with 60 cards. Of course you'll want to pick up some booster packs ($2.79 each) that come with 11 cards to supplement your starter deck. Look for the *Pokémon* CCG in stores this January.

AN AWESOME HOLIDAY

Awesome Entertainment brings you a set of holiday cards featuring your favorite Awesome characters. Each set of six cards ($9.95) features original illustrations by Rob Liefeld and Ian Churchill of characters from *The Coven*, *Re:Gex*, *Badrock* and *Youngblood*. Look for the cards now.

SEASONS GREETINGS It's going to be a cool yule with these Awesome cards.

SUPER TEES

Graphitti Designs will release a series of 100-percent cotton comic book T-shirts this January that are guaranteed to keep you feeling warm and looking cool. Look for the Marvel Classic Hulk T-shirt ($19.95, $22.95 for XXL) featuring the phrase "Here Comes the Incredible Hulk" on the front and "There Goes the Incredible Hulk" on the back with a classic '60s picture of the Hulkster on a white shirt. Also look for the *Gambit* T-shirt ($22.95, 25.95 for XXL) that comes with color art of the ragin' cajun by *Gambit* artist Steve Skroce on a black shirt. You'll also find T-shirts for the animated Nightwing ($16.95, $19.95 for XXL) on a gray shirt and a new version of the animated Supergirl ($16.95, $19.95 for XXL) on a white shirt. W

FASHION PLAY Only you can decide to go for the all-ages fun of Supergirl, or the more mature Kevin Smith properties.

Check your local stores for availability of all these funky-fresh products. Or ask your friendly neighborhood comic store to special order 'em for ya!

YO! Are you a company who sells stuff cool enough to make the grade here? Let us be the judge of that. Send any info and/or samples to:

Stuff for Stuff
c/o Wizard Entertainment
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

THE
The Black Embrace
#1
CREATED BY
Tony Daniel
WRITTEN BY
Scott Lobdell
ART BY
Tony Daniel
TONY DANIEL
The Tenth and all related characters are ® and © 1998 Tony Daniel
image

video STUFF

By Matthew Danish

Video killed the radio star, but who's complaining? Certainly not us. Welcome to "Video Stuff," a column where we let loose with news, previews, reviews and super-secret codes for the hottest, most spanktacular console and computer games around. Fire up the controllers...it's video game time.

STAR TREK'S NEW WORLD

Interplay is boldly going where no game company has gone before. The company is working on a strategy war game based on the Star Trek universe. *Star Trek: New Worlds* will allow players to campaign as the United Federation of Planets, the Romulan Empire or the Klingons. No release date for the game has been set, but the game's designer Neil Jackson is quoted as saying, "It's a 3-D, real-time strategy game where you get to build colonies on the new worlds and evolve them, extracting resources from the planet to make each colony self-sustaining, shipping in new personnel and training them up, developing new buildings and vehicles. You also get to battle against a whole range of enemies—some old, some new—all of whom are out to do the same as you.

"You'll be competing for materials, battling against disease, protecting weaker allies, ducking and diving in diplomacy, and often launching an all-out campaign of full-blown war against opponents. If I had to, I think I'd have to say the game's most impressive feature is that it's about three different games rolled into one—a strategy game, a character-based war game, and a 3-D blast-'em-up."

GODZILLA GOES ONLINE

Sure the "Godzilla" movie stunk like a ton of rotting fish, but Kesmai is hoping to redeem the giant monster's image with *Godzilla Online.*

Recently released, this game can be accessed through the "Godzilla" movie's official Web site: www.godzilla.com/.

Kesmai describes *Godzilla Online* as a "fast-paced action game that allows players to assume the role of a soldier, a reporter, a scientist or a baby Godzilla." Players interact in locales which closely match locations taken from events in the movie, including Madison Square Garden, Fulton Fish Market and the 23rd Street Subway. Players can select different modes of play, such as Last Man Standing and Escape From N.Y. The game features a variety of weapons and surprises—including the ability to play the game without weaponry as a reporter.

SIZE DOES MATTER Madison Square Garden gets wrecked big-time in *Godzilla Online.*

WINGED WONDER

Casting has been completed for the "Wing Commander" movie based on the *Wing Commander* CD-ROM games series created Chris Roberts. Roberts' company Digital Anvil has begun shooting the $27 million film in Luxembourg and Germany. It features Freddie Prinze Jr. as Blair, Matthew Lillard as Maniac and Jurgen Prochnow as Commander Gerald. The film also co-stars Saffron Burrows and Elise Neal. The movie's plot is rumored to feature a scenario in which the fighter pilots must save the entire galaxy from a nuclear armageddon—and the evil race the Kilrathi. No release date has been set. ■

CD COMMANDANT Actor Jurgen Prochnow fuels up to battle the evil aliens Kilrathi in "Wing Commander."

UP AHEAD

Snake's in full 'Gear'...
Spider-Man goes Silver...and
Demitri does the Monster Mash!!!

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DF Premiere: Danger Girl Special #1

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METAL GEAR SOLID

MANUFACTURER: Konami
PLATFORM: Sony PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $39.99, available now

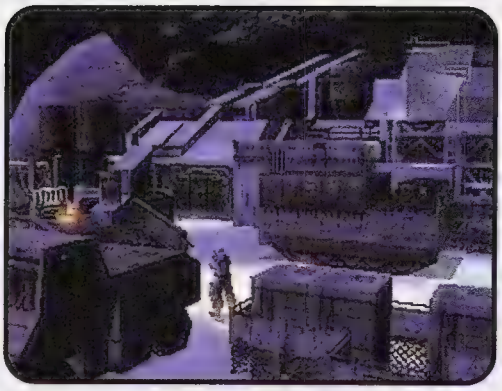
Hear us now and believe us now, *Metal Gear Solid* (which plays out on two discs) is a monster of a great game, and all deserve to be swallowed in its wake.

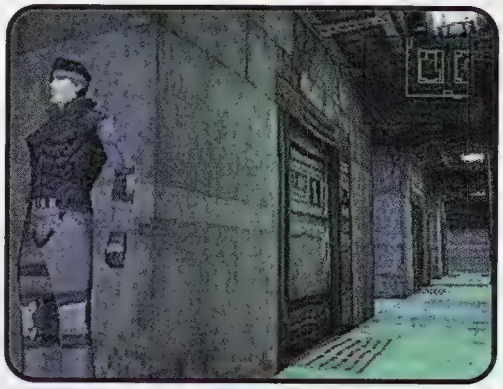
The protagonist, ex-CIA operative Solid Snake, must penetrate an Alaskan nuclear weapons facility which has been captured by terrorists. Using stealth, patience and an aggressive fighting style, Snake can disarm the facility and eventually release all the bad guys' hostages. Snake can use 20 different tools, including binoculars, C-rations and cigarettes, which everybody knows cause lung cancer. His firepower includes 30 weapons—not to mention Snake's abundance of hand-to-hand fighting skills.

Snake packs an impressive arsenal, but it's stealth that wins the day most times. Players need to sneak into the enemy facility without being spotted by their foes. On the opening levels Snake slithers into an underground facility, using his infrared map to move between armed guards whose flashlight beams can "catch" him, causing alarms to ring and bad guys to pour in. The second level requires Snake to steal a box of grenades by evading guards and timing a path through two giant intersecting searchlight beams. The end result is a nerve-wracking thrill ride.

The graphics are so realistic, Snake's breath can be seen when he exhales into the cold Alaskan night. Guards will become suspicious if they see Snake's tracks in the snow, and Snake can even strap C-4 to his foe's back for an explosively gross (but fun) time. ■

TRY IT... If the doctor says you're breathing, get *Metal Gear Solid.*





PLISSKEN? This Snake must disarm–and escape from–a terrorist-held nuclear base.

MARVEL SUPER HEROES VS. STREET FIGHTER

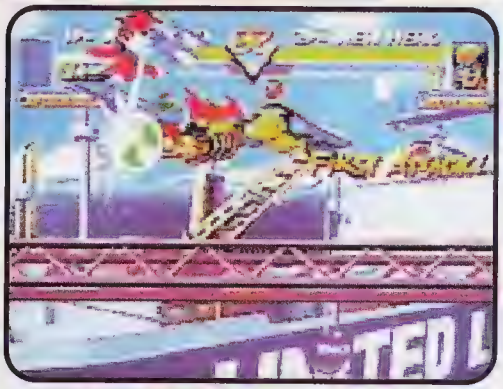
MANUFACTURER: Capcom
PLATFORM: Sony PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $39.95, available now

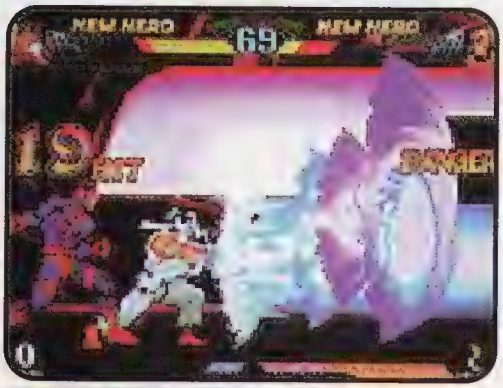
Two-dimensional fun has returned. Capcom, the king of the 2-D fighting game, takes some great Marvel Comics heroes and pits them against Capcom's greatest Street Fighters for the fist-meets-face, slam-bang *Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter.*

Players can battle with (among others) Street Fighters Ken, Ryu, Zangief, Vega, Dhalsim; Marvel heroes Captain America, Spider-Man, the Incredible Hulk; and such neat monsters as Blackheart and Shuma-Gorath. Each fighter, of course, has a style best suited for his personality and physique. The Hulk has a basic array of power moves with stomps, kicks, swinging side fists and fireballs. Shuma's octopus-like body can turn into a stack of circular balls to bounce off an opponent's head or take the shape of a flying wing and lunge at the opponent. All the game's basic fighting movements have a very smooth, plastic, cartoon feeling. And the fighting itself is on par with Capcom's other fighters, meaning that players will find themselves challenged at all times.

This game lacks a tag-team feature, but it does have all the other traditional modes gamers expect: Battle, Versus, Training, and a Crossover mode in which players play one character and when they're killed they immediately switch into the character's partner. ■

TRY IT... Do you like 2-D fighters such as *Marvel Super Heroes* and *Street Fighter vs. X-Men*? Then you'll love *Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter.*





BE A HERO Become Wolverine (top) or Cyclops (bottom) in *Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter,* where you can fight Capcom's best.

MORE→

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1999 GUEST OF HONOR

KEVIN SMITH

MORE SPECIAL GUESTS TO BE ANNOUNCED NEXT MONTH!

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www.wizardworld.com

DARKSTALKERS 3

MANUFACTURER: Capcom
PLATFORM: Sony PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $39.95, available now

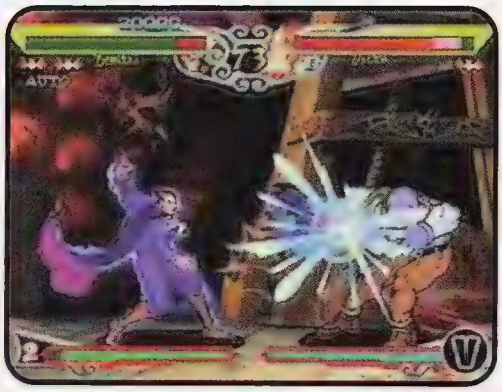
The creeps are back for yet another fight/fright-fest. *Darkstalkers 3* is still another Capcom 2-D, head-to-head fighter with all the standard trappings intact. The game features excellent gameplay with the cartoon-like creativity of *Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter*, but with a darker tone, more fluid character movement and even better backgrounds.

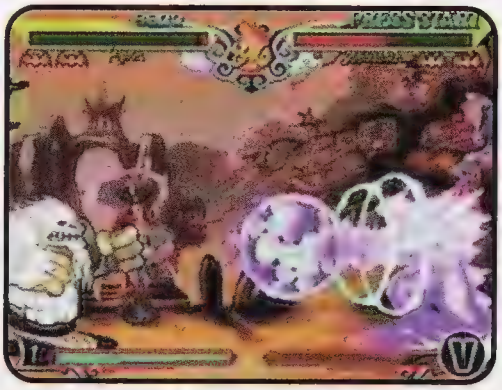
There are 18 characters to choose from this time. Original *Darkstalkers* ghoulies such as Felicia and Morrigan are here, and new characters Q-Bee, a queen bee character, and Baby Bonnie Hood, a violent Little Red Robin Hood, are added to the mix.

Wizard sampled an unfinished preview of the game and found it to be solid, if just a bit predictable, addition to Capcom's fighting canon. The game's plot is based on the *Darkstalkers* storyline where characters must fight for their souls in the combat arena in hopes of eventually battling Jedah, the Dark Messiah. Each character comes with his own special moves and combos; whereas the original *Darkstalkers* had a few characters who were vastly superior to some of their counterparts, *Darkstalkers 3* does an excellent job of balancing the fighters.

TRY IT... If you like the TV show "Groovy Ghoulies", or the *Darkstalkers* series, unearth a coffin to get *Darkstalkers 3*.

Hardened game fans may yet again be put off by the game's endings. After plowing through the game in its entirety, the winning player is rewarded with a static screen shot and a long narrative completing the victorious character's storyline. In the days of full-motion video, this is, to say the least, a monstrous let-down. ■





GRAVEYARD SMASH Whatever happened to the Transyvania Twist? Who cares? Check out these monsters pounding on each other!

CHEATSHEET webline

SPECIAL MOVES & SECRET CODES

'Fifth Element' Cheat Code

Want to take the PlayStation game *Fifth Element* to a new level? Try this super-secret cheat code which, if done properly, will enable users to access a cheat menu.

- Go to the main menu screen
- Press L1, L2, R2, R1, select
- Select "new game" and a cheat menu will be displayed.

Secret Characters for 'Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter'

To access a bunch of hidden characters in the PlayStation game *Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter*, use these handy-dandy commands:

MEGA ZANGIEF

- Start a game.
- On the character select screen, move the cursor to Blackheart.
- Hold START for 5-7 seconds.
- While holding all of the above, press JP + FP (OR) SK + RK together.
- Mega Zangief will replace Blackheart.

U.S. AGENT

- Start a game.
- On the character select screen, move cursor to M. Bison.
- Hold START.
- Hold UP for 5-7 seconds.
- While holding all of the above, press JP + FP (OR) SK + RK together.
- U.S. Agent will replace M. Bison.

SILVER SPIDER-MAN

- Start a game.
- On the character select screen, move cursor to Ryu.
- Hold START.
- Hold DOWN for 5-7 seconds.
- While holding all of the above, press JP + FP (OR) SK + RK together.
- Spider-Man will become black and silver.

IT CAME FROM THE WORLD WIDE WEB

www.stuart.iit.edu/students/adamadr/images/darkstal/darklink.htm
Morrigan's Dark Links is an elaborate *Darkstalkers* Web site.

www.stupid.com/
Stupid.com is guaranteed 100 percent stoopid fun.

www.geocities.com/TelevisionCity/Set/1676/hans.html
Learn about the tragic life and many deaths of this obscure and extremely nearsighted character from "The Simpsons."

www.stonecold.com/
Visit this site because ill-tempered, boss-hating WWF wrestler "Stone Cold" Steve Austin said so. And that's the bottom line.

www.metalgear.com/
Konami's *Metal Gear Solid* Web site has plenty of cool downloads and game tips for the hottest game of the year. ■

WIZARD

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CONTEST

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Witchblade/Tomb Raider:

Hide and Go Seek!

PRIZES

GRAND PRIZE (1): One expert explorer wins a Sony PlayStation, a copy of the *Tomb Raider III: The Adventures of Lara Croft* video game, a Michael Turner sketch of Sara Pezzini and Lara Croft, all three cover versions of the first *Tomb Raider/Witchblade* comic and all five of the cover versions of the brand-new *Witchblade/Tomb Raider* comic each signed by Turner, plus a poster with those saucy vixens.

FIRST PRIZE (2): Two diligent detectives each win a copy of the *Tomb Raider III: The Adventures of Lara Croft* video game and all three cover versions of the *Tomb Raider/Witchblade* comic and all five of the brand-new *Witchblade/Tomb Raider* comics each signed by Michael Turner, plus a poster of the twosome.

SECOND PRIZE (5): Five incredible investigators each win the regular cover version of the *Tomb Raider/Witchblade* comic and all five of the brand-new *Witchblade/Tomb Raider* comics each signed by Michael Turner, plus a poster of those wacky chicks.

SO HOW D'YA WIN ALL THAT LOOT? Hidden throughout this incredible issue are a bunch of little Lara Crofts. Each of them is causing a bit of mischief and we need you to help Sara Pezzini find them so we can put a stop to it. When you have found them all, jot down on a *separate piece of paper* what page numbers you found the cute little Laras on, and send it in with your completed entry form below. We're not gonna tell you how many to look for, so you're gonna have to really use those detective skills of yours. Just keep this in mind: they aren't all gonna be easy to find. Get those boots on, strap that gun to your side and get searching!

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THIS CONTEST IS SPONSORED BY TOP COW PRODUCTIONS. NEVER PLAY *CLUE* WITH IT'S EMPLOYEES, THEY'RE ALL KICK-BUTT DETECTIVES!

RAIDERS OF THE LOST LAW

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Entertainment, Top Cow Productions, Eidos Interactive, their immediate families and Columbo. Ever notice that you never see what he's wearing under that trenchcoat? Hmm... Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip, e-mail address and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "Witchblade/Tomb Raider: Hide and Go Seek!" Contest, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries and all rights relating thereto become property of Wizard Entertainment and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 26, 1999.** Wizard Entertainment is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Winners will be selected based on random drawing by Wizard Entertainment. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Winners will be notified no later than March 5, 1999. If an entrant, having been declared as a winner, does not accept the prize or the prize or prize notification is undeliverable, another entry will be selected. In the event that a prize is not available or it becomes impossible for the sponsor to award the prize which has been designated, the sponsor retains the right to substitute a prize or product of equal value to the winner. Determination of whether a prize or product is of equal value is in the sole discretion of the sponsor. Don't worry, it'll be just as cool. Winning entries will be selected on or about March 12, 1999.

For a list of winners, available after March 12, 1999, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "Witchblade/Tomb Raider: Hide and Go Seek!" Winners List, c/o Wizard Entertainment, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

ENTER NOW!

Fill this out, attach your entry and put it an envelope.
Send to:

"Witchblade/Tomb Raider: Hide and Go Seek!" Contest,
c/o Wizard Entertainment,
P.O. Box 118,
Congers, NY 10920-0118

"Witchblade/Tomb Raider: Hide and Go Seek!" Contest Entry Form

CONTEST DEADLINE FEBRUARY 26, 1999!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____ E-Mail Address _____

DID YOU INCLUDE YOUR LIST OF LARA CROFTS ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER?

HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES

Hey, quit yer whinin' ya babies. They don't make figures of your favorite characters? You think you could make better ones than already exist? Either way, it's time to put up or shut up. The figures you see here were crafted by ordinary readers just like you. Starting with simple store-bought action figures, these go-getters combined a little imagination with some stuff from around the house. They will now be judged by the highest authority...us!

GRAND-PRIZE WINNER

PRINCESS LEIA IN SLAVE GARB

Lance Lawson of Victoria, Australia

The Force is strong in this one. Leia, a modified Super-Size Angela figure from McFarlane Toys with some Super Sculpey thrown in, is dressed to kill even the most corpulent space gangster.

WHAT WE GAVE AWAY!

The grand-prize winner takes home a set of eight Full Moon action figures, featuring the boys from the "Puppet Master" films: Blade, Pinhead, Six Shooter, Jester, Tunneler, Leechwoman, Totem and Torch!

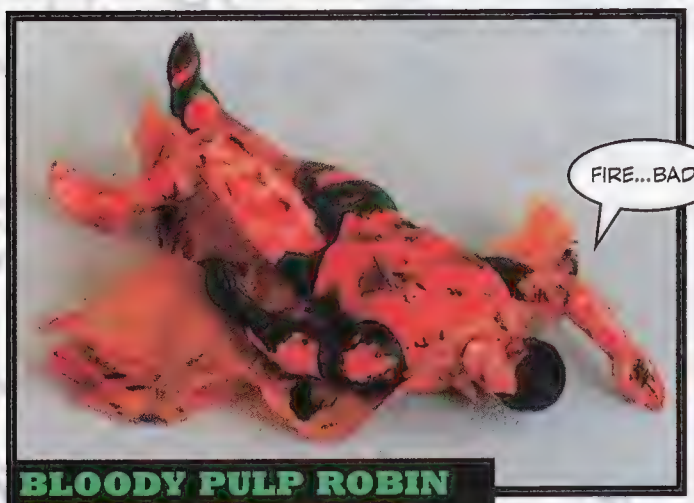
Muchas gracias to the folks at Full Moon for the cool swag!

HONORABLE MENTIONS

DR. CECILIA REYES

Preston D. Tenney II of Buckingham, W. Va.

Reluctant X-woman Dr. Reyes steps into the spotlight, emerging from a Toy Biz Robot Fighter Jubilee and some putty. We say, the doctor is in, baby!



BLOODY PULP ROBIN

John Fairholton of Minneapolis, Minn.

It takes a sick mind to do an action figure of dead Robin, a.k.a. Jason Todd–but an even sicker set of minds to print a photo of it. Kudos to the demented John Fairholton, who created this masterpiece from a Kenner Super Powers Robin.

DR. LIGHT

Jack Larsen of Milwaukee, Wis.

Look closely and you can see the eternal sadness on perpetual loser Dr. Light's mug. Light was born of a Mattel Secret Wars Magneto body, a Batman: The Animated Series Ra's Al Ghul head from Kenner and other neat stuff.

THE THING

Luca and Massimo of Rome, Italy

Sigh. Luca and Massimo might have won this month's contest for their nifty ceramic Thing, if only they'd included their last names and a mailing address. Sorry, guys.

Do you want in on the fun? To enter the homemade figure contest, send at least TWO well-lit, clear, color photographs (**No Polaroids, and put 'em in cool or funny poses!**), along with your name, address, a DETAILED DESCRIPTION of how you created your figure, your full phone number (including area code) and even e-mail address to:

SUBMIT!

Homemade Heroes
c/o Wizard Entertainment
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1 WOLVERINE

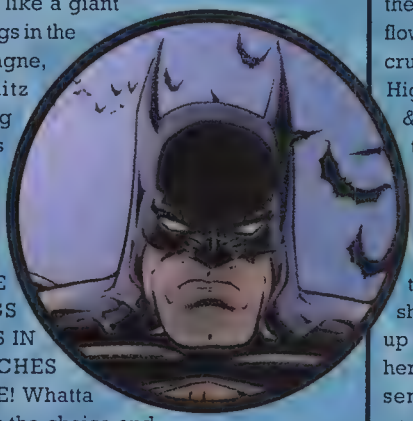
Catchy sound effects! Ya can't deny their importance! Ya just can't! Look at Wolverine. He's as much defined by the "SNIKT!" of his claws as he is by anything else. Really! Go anywhere in the world—anywhere—and walk up behind someone. Whisper "SNIKT!" in his ear. If you're not immediately pummeled or arrested, then he knows you're talkin' about everyone's favorite hairy-backed, butt-kickin' savage Canadian—Wolverine. Heck, catchy sound effects are so important, we even have our own here at *Wizard.* What is it? Well, it sounds kinda like someone stepping on a duck...and it's accompanied by a foul odor. But it works.

2 SPAWN

What's it look like when Spawn stubs his toe? A lot like this. And here's a little secret—even though he's a tough-talkin', street-walkin', green-stuff spewin' superhero from (Literally!) Hell, Spawn's a big sissy-Mary when it comes to pain. Every time he gets a boo-boo, he goes runnin' to mama to kiss it all better. But since he's the star of multiple comic series, an HBO cartoon and eleventeen toy lines, Spawn's net worth is more than any four Central American republics combined, even when they've just had a great banana harvest for the year. That eases a lotta pain.

3 BATMAN

File it under "Life Choices, Bad Ones." Batman is Batman, but Batman is also Bruce Wayne, millionaire playboy. That means he can dress like a giant rodent and punch thugs in the face, or...sip champagne, eat caviar off of Ritz crackers and hang and bang with chicks the likes of which you've only seen in movies such as "Wild Things." So what's he do? HE DRESSES LIKE A RODENT, HANGS OUT ON ROOFTOPS IN WINTER AND PUNCHES THUGS IN THE FACE! Whatta dough-head! Give us the choice and we'd forsake comic book stardom to be hip-deep in crab puffs and Neve Campbell.

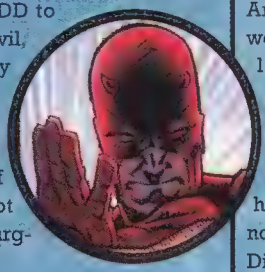


4 WITCHBLADE

When it comes to personal hygiene products, Sara Pezzini, this generation's designated Witchblade chick, does half the job. The hair? Looks great! It's bouncy, full of body and flows like Niagara Falls. But the face? Bleargh. There's more crusty craparoonie on her face than the entire Kennedy High School *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* Fan Club put together. Now granted, those Witchblade tendrils across Ms. Pezzini's pretty little mug are protective, but can't she do a little make-up job here to make herself look more presentable? Isn't a little cover-up in order? At least some Oxy-10? Maybe some foundation?

5 DAREDEVIL

Secrets of comics...revealed! *Daredevil* hit rock-bottom in 1987. The title was sucking wind and no one seemed to care about ol' Matt Murdock anymore. So in an effort to shake things up, Marvel traded DD to Harvey Comics for Harvey's Li'l Devil, Hot Stuff. The trade was voided by NBA Commissioner David Stern. This was a good thing for Marvel. 'Cause now, revitalized by a Marvel Knights relaunch and the writing of Kevin Smith, DD is kickin' ass. Hot Stuff? Last we saw, he was flippin' burgers at Hardees.

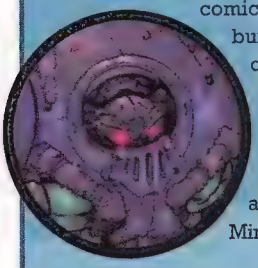


6 FATHOM

Leading the league in "come hither" looks this season is Aspen Matthews, the deep-sea beauty known as Fathom. And make no mistake, if Fathom were to flash one of these alluring looks in our general direction, we'd follow her into the deep blue without even thinking about scuba gear, swim fins or those annoying inflatable "floatie" things that little kids have to wear on their arms in the pool if they have paranoid parents. Yup. Matthews says "plunge," we get wet. Diver down!

7 CALIBRETTO

Much like NFL players and pro wrestlers, Calibretto (the war machine of *Battle Chasers* fame) has no neck. So if this comic book biz ever goes sour, he's got built-in qualifications for a new job. He could always go and play front four (Yes, all four of 'em.) for the Washington Redskins, or get himself some nice glittery tights and take up the manly art of pro 'rasslin' as a career. Or run for governor of Minnesota. Hey, it's nice to have options.



8 THOR

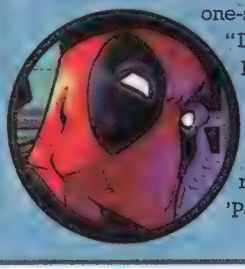
Speakin' of guys who look like no-neck, steroid-sucking monstrosities, we submit for your approval: One Mighty Thor, Norse god of thunder. Thor's obviously well-developed physique, however, isn't better living through chemistry. It's the result of good breeding. Hey, when your papa is Odin, All-father of the gods, you get a bitchin' bod without having to even hit the gym. And when your creative team is Dan Jurgens and John Romita Jr., you get a hit comic to boot.

9 PREACHER

Meanwhile, over here at No. 9, Preacher Jesse Custer is just an average, normal, everyday guy in the physical sense. But he still kicks a ton of bad-guy butt, using a tough streak a mile wide, a sense of right-'n'-wrong that just won't quit, and an ass-stompin' sensibility that only comes from Texas. Nothing gets in his way when he sets out to set the bad guys straight—not even serious injury to his precious ocular organs. Jesse can still kick your ass...with one eye tied behind his back.

10 DEADPOOL

Those of you who wasted October raking leaves and dressing up like a ballerina to get bite-size Snickers bars missed out on a comic event of preposterous proportions: Deadpool Month! Marvel hit with a magnum load of hilarious Deadpool one-shots and the start of 'Pool's big-ass "Dead Reckoning" crossover. Result? Cultured comic connoisseurs got a double-dose of Deadpool, and newbies turned on to the merc-with-a-mouth in record numbers. Score one for the 'Poolman! And marketing!



MORT OF THE MONTH

ONE LAME-ASS CHARACTER

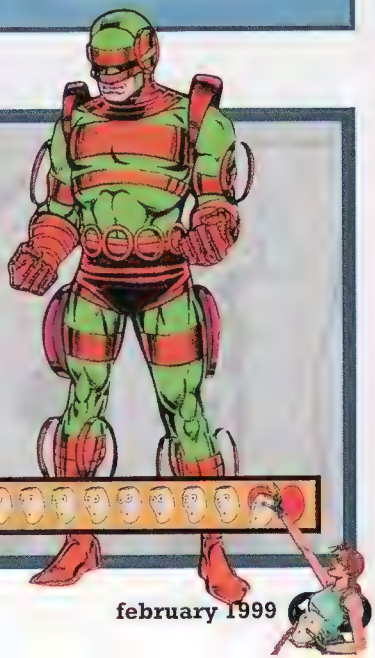
THE RINGER

Criminal Anthony Davis bought a helmet from the Robocop Surplus Store, got a bunch of metal rings, and cracked a safe! Surprise! The safe belonged to Marvel's hero, Nighthawk. The Ringer got his teeth busted.

In jail, a prison dentist needed months to fix Davis' teeth. When the hyped-up hoop-hurler got outta the joint, he promptly ran afoul of Spider-Man, who was more than a match for the Ringer's (Oooh! Scary!) little rings. Spidey kicked his tail as the Ringer pleaded, "Please! Not in the face!"

Tired of getting his teeth knocked clean out of his head, the Ringer retired. He was later mercifully put to sleep by another supervillain.

His body was identified...through his dental records.



MORTOMETER

picks

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN JANUARY

book of the month

BATMAN: NO MAN'S LAND

DC COMICS "No Law and a New Order," Parts 1-4. Visit scenic Gotham City—it's no longer part of the United States, which means...no sales tax! Thrill-seekers will love the roaming gangs and supervillains trying to carve up the city like they would a Christmas turkey. Look closely, and catch a glimpse of Gotham's newest hero, Batgirl. Kevlar body armor recommended, and—sorry—no refunds. *Batman: No Man's Land, Detective Comics* #730, *Batman* #560 and *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #83. By Bob Gale, Alex Maleev and Wayne Faucher. $1.99 each; $3.95—*NML Collector's Edition;* $2.95—*NML*

ASTRO CITY #16

HOMAGE/DC COMICS While hunting a supervillain serial killer, the shiny metal felon Steeljacket stumbles down memory lane. He bumps into the has-been hero El Hombre (translation: "The Man"), a former Honor Guardsman. Time's been tough for The Man, and he's now the superhero equivalent of that other guy from Wham. By Kurt Busiek, Brent Anderson and Will Blyberg. $2.50

AVENGERS #14

MARVEL Huzzah! The verbose, loquacious, hirsute gadabout mutant Beast revisits his former compatriots in the Avengers to bestow upon them a wealth of indecipherable jargon. (Translation: The Beast shows up at Avengers Mansion.) With some great trepidation, we are loathe to note that a rapscallion of the highest order shall engage in conduct unbecoming and most indubitably incorrigible. (And a bad-ass villain shows up, too.) Vocabulary improvement by Kurt Busiek, George Pérez and Al Vey. $1.99

AVENGERS FOREVER #4 (OF 12)

MARVEL Earth's Mightiest Heroes the Avengers are stuck in all sorts of different eras and we blame that time-shifting fiend Kang for the whole sordid mess. Whether it's the past, present or future, that rat-bastard's always doing evil stuff! By Kurt Busiek, Carlos Pacheco and Jesus Merino. $2.99

BONE #36

CARTOON BOOKS Get out the 40-foot scratching post and industrial-strength litter box. The humongous kitty-kat Roque Ja is back—and just when that weasel Phoney Bone decided to change his mischievous ways. Still, the road to good intentions is plagued with many a pothole, and Phoney seems to be leading Gran'ma Ben right into a trap. By Jeff Smith. $2.95

DAREDEVIL #5

MARVEL Seems Daredevil is stuck baby-sitting some brat who just might save the world...or destroy it. Stinky diapers are the least of DD's worries, though, as the devilish Mephisto shows up to reveal the baby's true identity, and a supervillain's waiting to ensure the Man Without Fear becomes the Man Without a Pulse. By Kevin Smith, Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti. $2.50

MR TITLES DENOTED WITH AN MR CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

DOCTOR MID-NITE #1 (OF 3)

DC COMICS Dr. Piter Cross is struck blind by an "accident," but soon learns the night has become his greatest ally—he can see perfectly in the darkness. Using his newfound ability, Cross becomes the hero Dr. Mid-Nite and sets out on a crusade to rid the city of Portsmouth of its drug problem, permanent-like. By Matt Wagner and John K. Snyder. Wagner says, "We're really playing up the fact that he's a superhero doctor and, in fact, we go to some effort in the first issue to establish that he's already almost a superhero before any accident blinds him. He's very much an activist on a very street level sort of existence." **$5.95**

GREEN LANTERN #110

DC COMICS Hey, Green Lantern's a babe with green skin and the body of a *Playboy* playmate! And Green Arrow's a young kid! The times, they are most definitely a-changin'. Usher in a new era of Green Lantern/Green Arrow team-ups when the two neophyte heroes join forces to hunt for the old Green Arrow, Ollie Queen, and end up confronting Jade's pappy, Alan Scott, whose GL powers have gone wonky. By Ron Marz, Darryl Banks and Terry Austin. **$1.99**

GRENDEL: BLACK, WHITE, & RED #3 (OF 4)

DARK HORSE Hunter Rose is his own personal blood bank—but he's a lot better at *drawing* blood than giving it up. Learn all about the assassin's overly violent early years, the origin of the strange black mask he wears, and tons of other secret stuff. By Matt Wagner, Mike Allred, Guy Davis and more. **$3.95**

newreleases

FIRST TIME OUT

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: THE ORIGIN #1 **(Dark Horse)** Relive Buffy's early days and her first attempts at wasting the undead. **$2.95**

EARTH X #0 **(Marvel)** Welcome to a strange, new Earth in Marvel's not-too-distant future, where every being on the rock has superpowers. **$3.99**

FANBOY #1 **(DC Comics)** Sigmund Freud would love Finster, a young boy who constantly dreams of DC superheroes. **$2.50**

GREEN LANTERN: THE NEW CORPS #1 **(DC Comics)** GL Kyle Rayner goes off into space to recruit new members for the Green Lantern Corps. **$4.95**

J. O'BARR'S THE CROW #1 **(Kitchen Sink)** Goth rocker Dreux Dumaine was gratefully dead until the Crow resurrected him to fight evil. **$3.50**

THE NEW TEEN TITANS ARCHIVES VOLUME 1 **(DC Comics)** Forget pimples and bad hair days, this hardcover reprints the first eight issues of the sidekick-starring *The New Teen Titans*. **$49.95**

THE SANDMAN PRESENTS: LUCIFER #1 **(Vertigo/DC Comics)** Fallen angel Lucifer goes on a mission from God to unlock a mystery regarding a strange wish-granting force. **MR. $2.95**

STAR WARS: BOBA FETT—ENEMY OF THE EMPIRE #1 **(Dark Horse)** Boba Fett gets a dent in his helmet from fighting his evil employer Darth Vader. And then some. **$2.95**

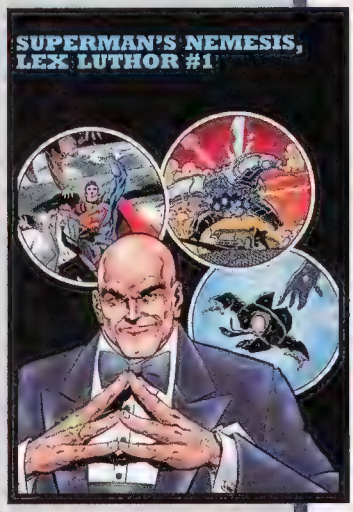
SUPERMAN'S NEMESIS, LEX LUTHOR #1 **(DC Comics)** Super-jerk and Superman's foe Lex Luthor finds his heartless mega-conglomerate company Lexcorp under attack from within. **$2.50**

SUPERMEN OF AMERICA #1 **(DC Comics)** Young teens dress up in tights and defend Metropolis when Superman's out of town. **$2.50**

TEEN TITANS ANNUAL #1 **(DC Comics)** Classic tales from the now really old Teen Titans (Wonder Girl, Aqualad, Robin and Kid Flash) are reprinted in this 80-page juggernaut. **$4.95**

TITANS SECRET FILES #1 **(DC Comics)** Well, if we told you what was in this book, it wouldn't be a secret. Duh! Okay, one hint: None of the stories involve Robin losing his pants or becoming one of them cabana boys. **$4.95**

THE TRENCHCOAT BRIGADE #1 **(Vertigo/DC Comics)** Mystical beings the Phantom Stranger, John Constantine, Doctor Occult and Mister E wear trenchcoats and battle evil. **MR. $2.50**



TSUNAMI GIRL #1 **(Flypaper Press/Image)** We can imagine a villain saying, "You are all wet Tsunami Girl!" Hah! (Except for the fact that Tsunami Girl is a disc jockey, fleeing from gang warfare in the twisted little nowhere we call Los Angeles.) **$2.95**

VAMPIRELLA #0 **(Harris Comics)** Blood-sucking babe Vampirella is thrust into a scary new world and meets Chaos! Comics' Lady Death in a tale that sets up Vampi's future. **$2.95**

VEXT #1 **(DC Comics)** Heaven had a massive round of layoffs. Meaning Vext, the god of Mishap, is residing on Earth and meeting Superman and the angel Zauriel. **$2.50**

HELLBLAZER #135

VERTIGO/DC COMICS "Haunted," Part 2 (of 6). It's your classic boy meets girl, boy loses girl, girl gets carved up by a psycho killer, guy travels into the deepest, darkest, creepiest stench-pits of London to find the nut job and exact revenge story. And when anti-hero John Constantine wants revenge, you can bet it's gonna be gruesome squared. By Warren Ellis and John Higgins. **MR. $2.50**

HITMAN #135

DC COMICS It's the story, of a man named Tommy
who was abandoned by his parents long ago.
He was nuts, and started killing
still he was all alone.
'Til the one day when the Hitman met his sister
and found out one of his folks was still alive
now the two are off to Ireland
and that's the way they all became the Monaghan bunch!
By Garth Ennis, John McCrea and Garry Leach. **$2.50**

INCREDIBLE HULK #474

MARVEL "The Great Astonishment," Part 3 (of 3). The Incredible Hulk and his new partner, the bizarre Xanterean, visit the Watcher's fortress to retrieve a wonderful artifact. Plus, check out Thunderbolt Ross' confrontation with the villainous freak Abomination. Y'know, the guy responsible for the death of Ross' daughter? By Joe Casey, Javier Pulido and Sean Parsons. Casey says, "[The Hulk and Xanterean] are there to get this thing called the Ultimate Machine that comes from *Tales to Astonish*. It's basically a lampshade you can put on your head and you'll learn the secrets of the universe." **$2.99**

INHUMANS #5 (OF 12)

MARVEL Mankind attacks the city of Attilan and now the alien Inhumans, led by the silent Black Bolt, must weigh their options. Meanwhile, the vile human Stalyenko beats the war drums, trying to unite humans against Attilan and its inhabitants. And what's the superhero Black Widow got to do with all of this? By Paul Jenkins and Jae Lee. **$2.99**

IRON MAN #14

MARVEL Space. The final frontier. These are the voyages of Iron Man, sent to the moon by the spy agency S.H.I.E.L.D. to keep Ronan the Accuser, the Watcher and the Fantastic Four from creating an intergalactic brouhaha. Normally, this would be next to impossible, but with Iron Man's armor on the fritz, just delete the words "next" and "to." By Kurt Busiek, Roger Stern, Sean Chen and Larry Stucker. **$1.99**

JLA #27

DC COMICS "Crisis Time Five," Part 1 (of 3). Damn magical imps! Both the Justice League of America *and* the Justice Society of America come under the spell of a horde of all-powerful beings who resemble various genies, fairies and leprechaun-types. If we were betting men, we'd lay odds these creeps are coming from the fifth dimension. Or maybe France. By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell. **$1.99**

JONAH HEX: SHADOWS WEST #2 (OF 3)

VERTIGO/DC COMICS Old West gunslinger Jonah Hex has the temper of a rabid bear and a face resembling five miles of pothole-scarred Michigan road. Now he's gotta protect a freakish half-bear child and its mother from wacky Wild Will and his Wild West Show. By Joe R. Lansdale, Tim Truman and Sam Glanzman. **$2.95**

LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN #1 (OF 6)

WILDSTORM/DC COMICS While you were dozing in English class, you missed tales of great 19th-century characters such as Captain Nemo, Alan Quartermain, Sherlock Holmes and the seldom-seen Invisible Man. Now, these heroes must band together to protect Victorian-era England from the Asian crime lord Fu Manchu. By Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill. **$2.95**

NIGHTWING #29

DC COMICS The last of the red-hot superhero lovers, Nightwing and Huntress investigate some crooked construction scheme in the morally bankrupt city of Blüdhaven, and end up battling the villain Torque. (Hope they study up on their physics!) By Chuck Dixon, Scott McDaniel and Karl Story. **$1.99**

PREACHER #47

VERTIGO/DC COMICS The wretched businessman Odin Quincannon has plans for the town of Salvation, Texas, and they don't include Preacher Jesse Custer or his friends. And the suggestively named Miss

Oatlash wants a piece—or maybe more—of Salvation's lawman, too. By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **MR. $2.50**

ROBIN #62

DC COMICS Terrorists with the IQ of maple syrup are attacking Keystone City, totally unaware that the city's protected by Flash and Robin. Y'see, Robin's former hometown of Gotham was condemned, and the Boy Wonder's setting up shop in Keystone—which means he's legally obligated to team with the local crime fighter. By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Stan Woch. "Robin manages to get on Wally West's [The Flash] nerves throughout the story," Dixon says. "Because of Robin's close association with Nightwing, he knows all kinds of personal things about the Flash—while Robin gets to be this pint-sized man of mystery." **$1.99**

SAVAGE DRAGON #57

IMAGE The original Dragon's dead as a doorknob. But police officer William Jonson, who has the old Dragon's thoughts floating around his skull, has opted to fight crime as the new Dragon. Which Dragon is luckier, you ask? Well, one may triumph over death, and the other has to face the man in the iron mask named OverLord. You decide. By Erik Larsen. **$2.50**

STRANGERS IN PARADISE #21

ABSTRACT STUDIO Francine, Katchoo and David decide to share living space and discover that Hell is indeed other people. David becomes the target of a beautiful Asian woman's interest and Francine gets hit on by a married man. By Terry Moore. Also check out the *Strangers in Paradise: High School!* trade paperback, reprinting *SiP* #13-#16. **$2.75—*SiP #21;* $8.95—*SiP: High School!***

SAVAGE DRAGON #57

alsoshipping

MORE BOOKS TO GET

CAPTAIN AMERICA BOOKS (Marvel) Captain America finds himself stuck during Civil War times in *Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty* #7, and the newly armored Red Skull returns to menace Cap in *Captain America* #15. **$1.99 each**

THE DARKNESS #21 (Top Cow/Image) Jackie Estacado travels to Wynwood, the most evil town in America, to rescue his trapped pal Jenny. **$2.50**

DIVINE RIGHT #9 (WildStorm/DC Comics) Stuck in the creepy Hollow Realm, college student Max Faraday is on a collision course with a traitor. **$2.50**

FANTASTIC FOUR #15 (Marvel) Ronan the Accuser's got the Invisible Woman and now he's set to liberate the Kree. **$1.99**

FATHOM #5 (Top Cow/Image) Marine biologist Aspen Matthews gets wet and investigates her new powers. **$2.50**

THE FLASH #146 (DC Comics) Cobalt Blue is running through time, determined to kill two Flashes. **$1.99**

GAMBIT #2 (Marvel) Gambit launches a sneak assault on Muir Island, trying to steal a precious item from under the nose of his teammate Storm. **$2.99**

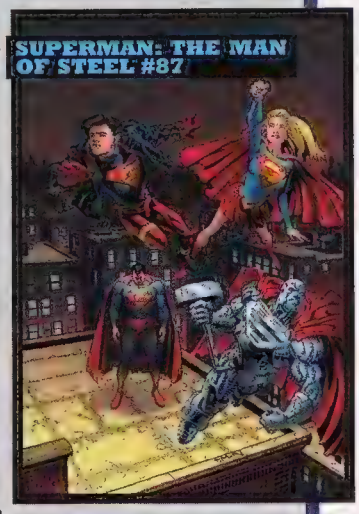
SPAWN #82 (Todd McFarlane Productions/Image) After Spawn's struck with some very painful revelations, he turns to a highly unlikely source for help. **$1.95**

SPIDER-GIRL #6 (MC2/Marvel) Actually, applying the term "girl" to a full-grown woman is quite sexist. She's a Spider-WOMAN and she has to deal with the attention-seeking new heroine Ladyhawke. **$1.99**

SPIDER-MAN BOOKS (Marvel) Meet the loathsome Lizard for the first time again in the pages of *Spider-Man: Chapter One* #5, and Iceman shows up just as Peter Parker's forced to save the life of the ersatz Spider-Man in *Amazing Spider-Man* #3. Iceman takes on Shadrac, while Petey and his wife are trapped at the villain's mercy in *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* #3. **$1.99 each**

STAR WARS BOOKS (Dark Horse Comics) Technophobe Jedi Knight Ki-Adi-Mundi is forced to rely on high technology to save his life in *Star Wars* #2. Crimson Guardsman Kir Kanos goes AWOL in *Star Wars: Crimson Empire II* #3 and, oddly enough, the Empire strikes back in *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back–Manga* #2. A huge leviathan attacks Jedi Knight Kyp Durron in *Jedi Academy–Leviathan* #4 and in *Mara Jade–By The Emperor's Hand* #6, female Jedi Mara Jade goes on one last suicide mission. **$2.95 each; $2.50–*Star Wars*; $9.95–*Manga***

SUPERMAN BOOKS (DC Comics) *Adventures of Superman* #565 features Superman inspiring a new superteam, the Supermen of America, and in *Action Comics* #752, the Supermen of America take to the streets, savagely beating evildoers. In *Superman: The Man of Steel* #87, Clark Kent spends one last night with his folks before giving up his civilian identity forever. **$1.99 each**


SUPERMAN: THE MAN OF STEEL #87

WITCHBLADE #29 (Top Cow/Image) Sara Pezzini and her new partner track down the dirt on jerkoid Ken Irons and his connection to the Witchblade. **$2.50**

WOLVERINE #136 (Marvel) Wolverine's stuck on a prison planet where all the inmates hate him–and the black specks in the lunch are crawling! **$1.99**

SUPERMAN ADVENTURES #29

DC COMICS It's ladies' night in Metropolis and all women accompanied by a Bizarro Superman get their drinks half-price! While ace reporter Lois Lane is accosted by the love-struck Bizarro, Superman's busy trading blows with the twisted bounty hunter Lobo. By Mark Millar, Aluir Amancio and Terry Austin. Millar says, "There's a theme where Lobo's sitting on top of Superman and won't get off until Superman lights his cigar with his heat vision. So, there's all sorts of things I thought I'd never get away with, but I have." **$1.99**

THOR #9

MARVEL Across the Rainbow Bridge, the land of Asgard has been subjugated by Dark Gods, a group of deities so foul and twisted they thought "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre" was a comedy. The Gods remade Asgard to suit their needs, and have seemingly triumphed over their mortal enemies the Asgardians. Somebody's gotta lay the smack down on these Dark God hosers, and we're guessing his name is Thor. By Dan Jurgens, John Buscema and Jerry Ordway. **$1.99**

THUNDERBOLTS #24

MARVEL Mysteries abound as that Citizen V guy rears his ugly head again. But is he here to take down the Thunderbolts...or join them? T-Bolt's leader Hawkeye is gonna have to figure it all out. Thing is, he and his teammates are a little busy trying to put the Masters of Evil down...for good! By Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Scott Hanna. **$1.99**

TITANS #1

DC COMICS Once, they were the Teen Titans. Now, their combined age is roughly 6,832 and they're as far from being teenagers as Antarctica is from warm. Regardless, the original five Titans (now called Nightwing, Wonder Girl, Flash, Tempest and Arsenal) reform the team and build a new Titans Tower headquarters just in time to defend it from a similarly reformed criminal group—H.I.V.E. By Devin Grayson, Mark Buckingham and Wayne Von Grawbadger. **$2.50**

UNCANNY X-MEN #366

on the edge

OFF THE BEATEN PATH

MONICA'S STORY #1

ALTERNATIVE COMICS Four score and seven years ago, our forefathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, one conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that the president can drop his drawers and get "favors" from his young female interns whenever he wants. Meet "Bill," a misunderstood presidential type and his spunky employee "Monica," as they live the greatest love story of all time, in the most oval office the world has ever seen. Proceeds partially go to fund the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund. By James Kochalka, Tom Hart and various others. **MR. $2.50**

TRANSMETROPOLITAN #19

VERTIGO/DC COMICS "The New Scum," Part 1 (of 6). Writer Spider Jerusalem has become the mouthpiece for the City's "New Scum" underclass. Spider seems unnaturally happy, which probably means his twisted mind has hatched an evil plan. By Warren Ellis, Darick Robertson and Rodney Ramos. Also check out the *Transmetropolitan: Lust for Life* trade paperback reprinting issues #4-#12. **MR. $2.50—#19; $14.95—*Lust for Life***

UNCANNY X-MEN #366

MARVEL "The Magneto War," Part 1 (of 4). The undiluted evil of Magneto has returned. The would-be world conqueror threatens the United Nations (like that's hard to do) and sics his mutant toadies the Acolytes on the X-Men. Meanwhile, Magneto's young doppleganger Joseph meets his real mother in Israel. By Alan Davis, Leinil Francis Yu and Tim Townsend. And be sure to pick up *X-Men: The Magneto War*, by Davis and Lee Weeks, where the whole saga begins. **$1.99—#366; $2.99—*Magneto War***

USAGI YOJIMBO #26

DARK HORSE "The Hairpin Murders," Part 1 (of 2). Elementary, dear Usagi. Samurai rabbit Usagi Yojimbo is thrust into a hard-boiled mystery involving a group of murdered merchants and their sordid pasts. By Stan Sakai. **$2.95**

WILDCATS (VOL. 2) #1

WILDSTORM/DC COMICS Ah, Italia. It's a beautiful country where the pasta is fresh, the army is weak and the people can't help voting fascists into power. Travel to the scenic canals of Venice, where Grifter and two other Wildcats hold a reunion of sorts. But there've been some big changes. Spartan's now an arms dealer and Emp is almost unrecognizable. And where are the other Wildcats? By Scott Lobdell and Travis Charest. **$2.50**

X-MEN #86

MARVEL "The Magneto War," Part 2 (of 4). While the X-Men attack Magneto's underlings the Acolytes, and Magneto threatens the world (and the world threatens him right back), Joseph is going to learn his true identity—which has a lot to do with the mysterious figure called Astra. Now if we only knew who this Astra character really was...By Alan Davis and Mark Farmer. **$1.99**

characterprofile

RAP SHEET

DEADPOOL

DREAM DATE: Despite his horrible appearance, Deadpool can get dates by using his image inducer to look like anyone he wants–even Peter Parker! (*Deadpool* #11)

BOTTOMLESS PIT: Where's the 'Poolman keep all his props and other goodies? Why in this seemingly bottomless rucksack with way-cool fasteners! (*Deadpool* #1, #21)

ARSENAL: 'Pool loves slicin' and dicin' ninjas, but he also uses guns to blow enemies away from a distance and even uses a laser whip against particularly nasty aliens! (*Deadpool* #23)

PIZZA FACE: An ugly side effect of his cancer, Deadpool's been horribly disfigured and rarely removes his mask. (*Deadpool/Death '98*)

STRONG GUY: Deadpool's no weakling–needing the Hulk's blood for medicinal reasons, he sliced up the Green Goliath for a blood sample, then ran him through with a sign post! (*Deadpool* #4)

BROKEN-HEARTED: Wade dumped his lover, Vanessa, to spare her from watching him die of cancer. Now he has the hots for X-Force's Siryn. (*Deadpool* #1, #2)

MARBLE PEACH: Deadpool considers his finest feature to be his rock-hard butt. Uh...so...uh, how about those Bears? (*Deadpool* #2)

WEIGHT WATCHERS: Deadpool once got himself *really* fat so he could become a sumo wrestler. (*Deadpool Team-Up* #1)

HEALING: Deadpool's healing factor (artificially derived from Wolverine) lets him regenerate body parts (like a cut-off finger), and keeps his cancer in check. (*Deadpool* #5)

MASS TRANSIT: The 'Pool's teleporter gets him from the Hellhouse hangout in Chicago to his San Francisco abode in no time at all. (*Deadpool* #1)

ORIGIN

Wade Wilson wanted to give up his mercenary life and become a hero. After washing out of Canada's Weapon X program with little to show for his efforts but an enhanced healing factor, Wilson was given over to the sadistic Dr. Killebrew and his assistant The Attending (Ajax) for additional experimentation. Their torturous treatment of Wilson led the other inmates to start a pool on how long he could hold out, hence the new moniker. The abused Deadpool eventually went loopy, attacked his jailers and escaped to begin life anew as a gun-for-hire.

NOW APPEARING

Following the "Dead Reckoning" story, *Deadpool* scribe Joe Kelly says the book will jump ahead a couple of months. The merc with a mouth will remain shell-shocked by the extremely difficult choice he made at the end of #25–a choice that will affect the destiny of the world for the next thousand years. "You think Deadpool was a little crazy before? Well, I'm gonna play it like he's nearly certifiable now," Kelly says. "He'll explore his life, face up to a new wave of mental problems. Deadpool has to deal with his issues, not the least of which are his guilt and feelings of responsibility."

REPORT card

COMIC BOOK REVIEWS

BY *WIZARD* EDITORS
BRIAN CUNNINGHAM,
ANDREW KARDON
AND
MIKE SEARLE

SPAWN
Nowhere man, nowhere plan

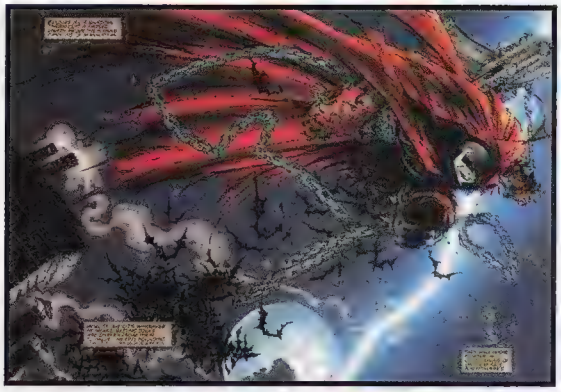
ISSUES REVIEWED: #71–#76
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: Image Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Todd McFarlane, Brian Holguin, Greg Capullo and Danny Miki
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $1.95/Monthly

What You Need to Know: For the love of his wife Wanda, soldier Al Simmons makes a deal with the devil and comes back to life as Spawn, a supernatural agent for Hell imbued with vast mystical powers. As the eternal struggle between good and evil marches towards Judgment Day, Spawn finds himself to be the pivotal figure in this epic battle.

The Good: Intricate linework and evocative coloring make for exceptionally moody storytelling. Action scenes such as Spawn vs. the vampire Fiend (#71) and characters like the garbage creation Heap (#73) are richly detailed and serve to draw readers right into the story.

The mysteries in *Spawn* have our attention. What's a vampire doing in the service of Heaven? Which side does Spawn truly serve? When will Armageddon strike? These are plot points which could keep the series revving high...

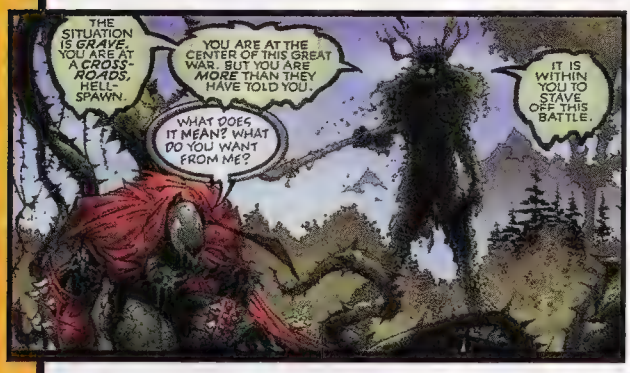
The Bad: Unfortunately, none of these mysteries are answered quick enough for our tastes. Issue #75, hyped as a "new direction for *Spawn*," doesn't explain anything—in fact, it seems like much of the "same old, same old." Bumbling detectives Sam and Twitch are still floundering around on old questions such as Spawn's identity (#72). Spawn is still a pawn between Heaven and Hell with no apparent way out. And after 76 issues, he's *still* pining over his wife Wanda, but can't face her because he's got a pizza for a face. Throw in some mindless fights and some musings in the ol' Spawn alleyway...and guess what? Nothing happens. Not only is the story not progressing, but it's hard to like a former sharp-as-a-knife soldier who doesn't seem all that swift. Every time Al whines about Wanda, we like him less and less.



Finally, did we miss a DC crossover or something? *Spawn*'s "Emerald Parliament" and "Greenworld" (#75) sound like blatant swipes of the "The Parliament of Trees" and "The Green" from Alan Moore's *Swamp Thing* run. The concept of an elemental force watching over the Earth isn't an original idea, but the approach taken by *Spawn* is way too close to classic *Swamp Thing* to be given the benefit of the doubt. Fans deserve to see something new and original in Image's top-selling book.

The Buzz: *Spawn* is a consistent top five selling book, there's a "Spawn" movie sequel planned for 2000 and the promise of something big looms in late '99...let's hope it delivers this time.

The Skinny: It seems like the creators are wasting time to keep the series going. Even if the main plot between Heaven and Hell isn't going to be resolved for a while, at least include something interesting while we're waiting. ■



Spawn's moody, intricate art and coloring does a great job of placing readers in the right mindset.

C'mon! We've been asking these same questions for 76 issues! Go somewhere, already!

THE GRADE: C

X-MAN
Beyond X-planation

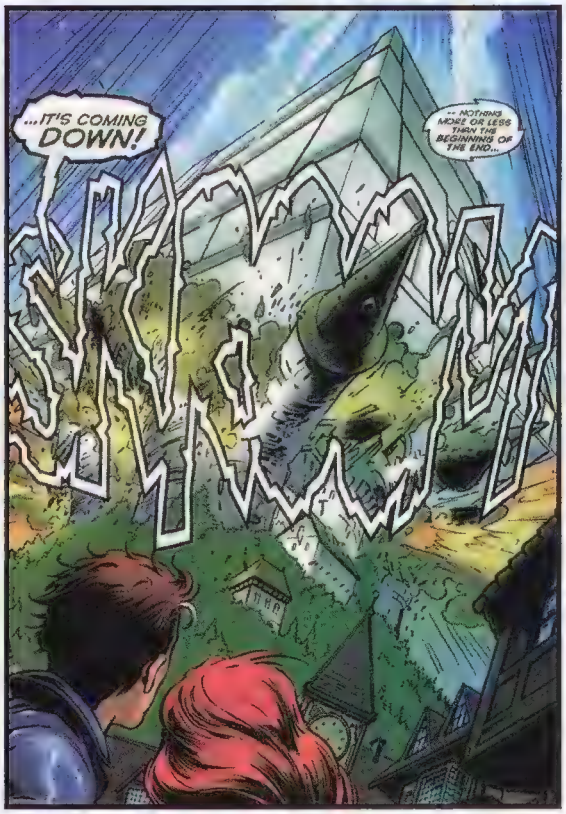
ISSUES REVIEWED: #41–#46
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: Marvel Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Terry Kavanagh, Roger Cruz and Bud Larosa
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $1.99/Monthly

What You Need to Know: On an alternate-reality Earth, Nate Grey is the genetically engineered son of mutants Jean Grey and Cyclops. After his world was destroyed, he found his way to ours, where he uses his powerful telekinetic/telepathic abilities to ensure his adopted Earth doesn't share the same fate as his original world. Unfortunately, X-Man's learned his powers will eventually cause him to explode and possibly take half the world with him.

The Good: There was an intriguing mystery in issue #41, where some mysterious creature was running around murdering people by siphoning off their energy. With an alien body signature similar to Nate's, X-Man believed he was performing these atrocities in his sleep. (It was actually the villain Nemesis disguised as Nate.)

It's nice to see a tight continuity between X-books. Tying into the recent "Psi-War" battle with the Shadow King over in *Uncanny X-Men* and *X-Men*, the psi-plane was destroyed, resulting in Nate temporarily losing his telepathy.

The Bad: There's a lot of things that need to be explained more clearly. A LOT. First off, Nate's the book's star, yet the recap pages barely touch upon his alternate-reality origins.



And the series itself keeps referencing "Age of Apocalypse," but never gets into it. Nate's "limitless psi-powers" could be spelled out more, as well. Then there's Maddy Pryor, the resurrected genetic clone of his mother Jean Grey. We were frequently scratching our heads wondering: What's her interest in Nate? Why are she and Nate bouncing around in Europe? And how about that mysterious, gruff character Ness, who looks an awful lot like an older Nate? Without these explanations, we found it hard to latch onto these characters.

Speaking of characters...where are they? Beyond Nate, Maddy Pryor and Ness, there's absolutely no supporting cast creating subplots to hold our interest.

And that interest wanes with X-Man's hokey elements. Maddy Pryor was resurrected by Nate using his psi-powers on her lingering psionic energy after her death in 1988's "Inferno" storyline. The evil Stryfe makes his grand return, landing his huge vessel on Doctor Doom's castle in Latveria, crushing it in a laughable scene (issue #45, if you missed it). And as for villains, Nate and Maddy fight their way through a sea of...drill-headed gnomes (#45)? Puh-leeze.

The Buzz: Although it's a lower-tier "X" title, *X-Man* still lands within the top 30 on the best-sellers charts.

The Skinny: We can't wait for Nate to blow up. That way, the series payoff will be enough to care about him. ■

Seeing Dr. Doom's castle crushed by Stryfe's ship made us laugh out loud–until it set in that it actually happened.

It's good to see major events like X-Men's "Psi-War" have repercussions in X-Man, resulting in Nate's loss of telepathy.

THE GRADE: D

STAR WARS: A NEW HOPE–MANGA

The best 'Star Wars' comic ever

ISSUES REVIEWED: #1-#4 ("A New Hope" movie adaptation)
GENRE: Sci-fi action/adventure
PUBLISHER: Dark Horse Comics
CREATOR: Hisao Tamaki (based on George Lucas' script)
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $9.95/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Based on the original "Star Wars" movie, this Japanese comic book adaptation tells the familiar story of Luke Skywalker as he joins the Rebel Alliance to fight the evil Empire led by Grand Moff Tarkin and Darth Vader.

The Good: This is the best "Star Wars" adaptation *ever*. No, scratch that, the best flat-out movie adaptation ever! *Star Wars: A New Hope–Manga* gives us such a fresh perspective on "Star Wars" that you forget it's adapting a 20-year-old movie and in a black-and-white format.

The art is phenomenal. Exciting, intense and vivid, the artwork brings life to this briskly paced science fiction epic like no other "Star Wars" comic has ever done. Whether it's the hideously charred bodies of Luke's aunt and uncle (issue #1), Han Solo's cocksure smile when talking about his ship (#2) or Darth Vader looming over Obi-Wan in the lightsaber battle from issue #3, you really feel the emotion and drama of the scenes. Injected with speed lines, this series mimics the spaceship dogfights of "Star Wars" and you'll find yourself flying through the pages.

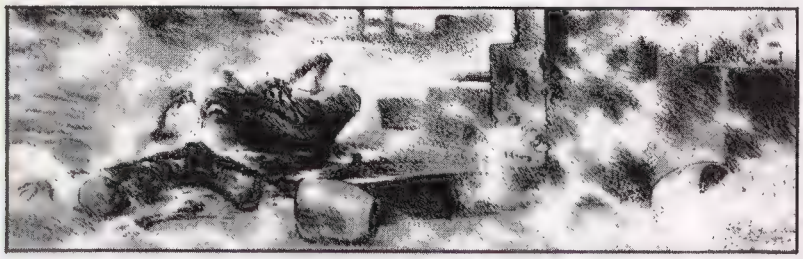
And you'll fly through the script, which is almost line-for-line from the original film. The scenes are all handled smoothly and accurately.

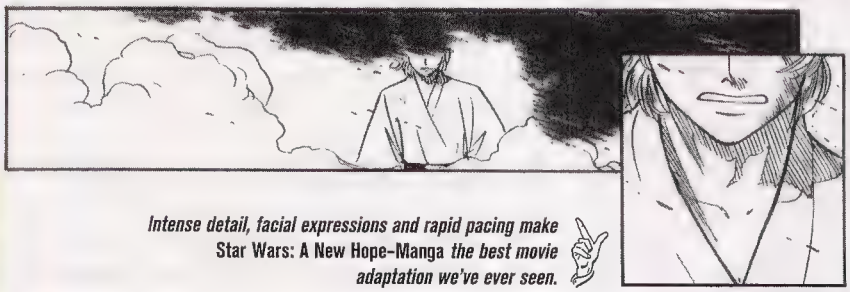
The Bad: Sometimes the manga art style and lightning-paced panel layout can lose you. In issue #2, Obi-Wan Kenobi gets into a bar fight with two aliens (you probably remember the Cantina scene), but when Obi-Wan ends up facing two different directions in back-to-back panels and quick cuts (no pun intended) show only flashes of the scene, it's hard to make out exactly what's going on. Then you've got the speed lines which, when overdone, obscure the very scene they are supposed to enhance. In the frequent space ship dogfights—the final confrontation against the Death Star, for example (#4)—the excessive speed lines and giant sound effects make the actual sequence of events confusing. Even though you know the story, it's difficult to follow every scene.

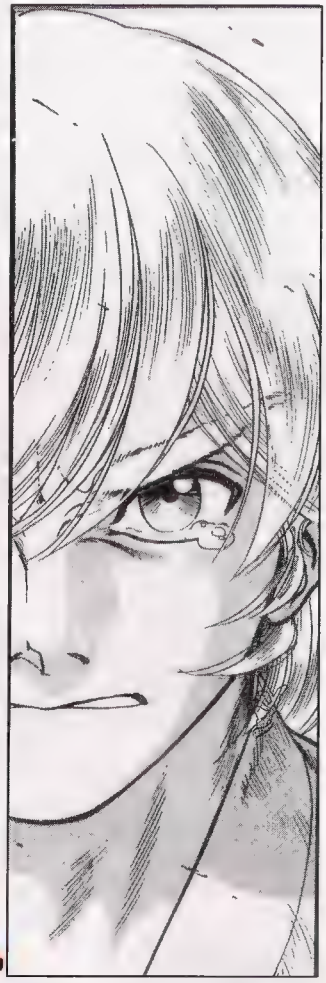
The only other drawback is the hefty price tag—$9.95 is a lot to shell out at one time, especially when there's four issues in the series.

The Buzz: After *Star Wars*, expect four-issue adaptations for both "The Empire Strikes Back" and "Return of the Jedi." Plus, with the first of the movie prequels just around the corner in May, the "Star Wars" hype is ready to go nova.

The Skinny: Star Wars comic fans rejoice! This adaptation pulls out all the stops, making it the best we've ever seen. Even the staunchest anti-manga fan will dig it. We can't wait for more. ■





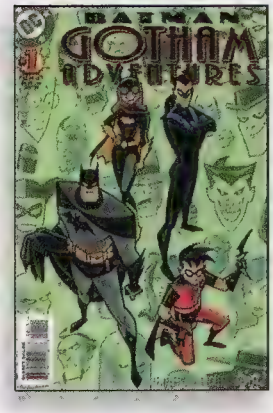


Intense detail, facial expressions and rapid pacing make Star Wars: A New Hope–Manga *the best movie adaptation we've ever seen.*

THE GRADE: A-

BATMAN: GOTHAM ADVENTURES

Dark Knight or Bat-Lite?



ISSUES REVIEWED: #1-#7
GENRE: Superhero action/adventure
PUBLISHER: DC Comics
CREATIVE TEAM: Ty Templeton, Rick Burchett and Terry Beatty
PRICE/FREQUENCY: $1.95/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Based on the animated "Batman" TV show starring the Dark Knight, Robin, Nightwing and Batgirl, this all-ages series tells stories outside of Batman's regular continuity.

The Good: This book ain't just for kids. Sure, the plots and themes in *Gotham Adventures* aren't nearly as dark and heavy as your average Batman book, but they have some really clever and intriguing angles. Issue #1 sees a victim's father put a $50-million bounty on the head of his son's murderer–the Joker! The results? Just about every Gotham super-criminal tries offing the Clown Prince of Crime. Then there's Two-Face's encounter with his abusive father (#2). Catwoman takes some proactive animal rights action when she sees some kitties being mistreated.

And thankfully, this series acknowledges the heavyweights within Batman's rogues gallery. In addition to those listed above, Riddler, Clayface, Mr. Freeze and Scarecrow all make appearances.

The art style, as per usual, fits perfectly. Cartoony and expressive, *Gotham Adventures* looks virtually identical to its animated TV counterpart.

The Bad: Despite some intriguing angles, these tales wrap up a bit too neatly. Issue #3 sees Scarecrow terrorizing a bank's inhabitants, including Batman himself. But thanks to a young Batman fan, the Dark Knight puts on a disguise (Don't ask why the kid had it in the first place!) and beats the Scarecrow in three panels. In issue #6, Deadman solves his own murder and quickly vanishes from sight, ending the tale before Batman and Robin can even comment on the whole situation. At times, the conclusions just seem rushed or forced.

While the series successfully adapts the animated series, the translation of the characters might turn off an older audience. This Batman's a little too kid-friendly. He's not as dark, mysterious and unstoppable as he used to be. Instead, he comes across as a protective older brother, taking care of his siblings and teaching them how to fight. Tying into that is the fact that (again, thanks to the animated series), Batgirl knows everyone's secret identity. It takes away some of the mystery.

At times, characters aren't explained enough, such as the whole Mr. Freeze story (#5). Since his story is quite different from regular Bat-continuity (Mr. Freeze is now just a living head that can be attached to different bodies), readers can easily get lost.

The Buzz: The animated series is still going strong, and January's release of the all-new "Batman Beyond" animated series should bring more fans over to the animated Bat-universe.

The Skinny: If you love the animated series, you'll love *Gotham Adventures*. Faithful to the show, it has a great set of characters, villains and some engaging plot angles. Unfortunately, some of the endings and character treatments may not jibe with the older comic fan.

Gotham Adventures' plots are very clever, as Batman stories go. Here, a victim's father places a $50-million bounty on Joker's head.

Following in the shoes of the "Batman" TV show, this version of Batman doesn't have the edge he used to.

THE GRADE: B-

The 6th Annual *Wizard* Fan Awards Ballot

OFFICIAL EXPLANATION!

FIND YOUR FAN AWARD BALLOT INSIDE THIS ISSUE'S POLYBAG!

POLITICS, SCHMOLITICS!

Why not flex your democratic muscles on something you *really* care about? Like comics!

Well, now you can. It's time for voting to begin for the 6th annual *Wizard* Fan Awards, the awards that you–yes, you!–the comic fans of the world decide!

Your votes will determine the winners of these prestigious and minty-fresh-flavored awards! Nominees are already provided for you here, as determined through an online poll (www.wizardworld.com). Don't like the nominees? Don't have a fit! Feel free to write in your own.

We encourage you to vote, but remember to follow these important rules and regulations:

1] Any material from the calendar year 1998 (comics, TV shows, whatever) is eligible.
2] You may vote for only one entry in any category. Multiple votes are all disqualified.
3] You don't have to vote for a listed nominee. Write-in candidates are perfectly acceptable.
4] You may send in only one ballot. All multiple ballots are disqualified.
5] Get your ballot in by March 1, 1999. Ballots postmarked after that date are null and void.
6] Send your ballot to:

Wizard Fan Awards
c/o Wizard Entertainment
P.O. Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

7] You can photocopy a ballot if your friend wants to vote.
8] Keep reading *Wizard: The Comics Magazine* to see the results! Or better yet, swing by the Wizard World Chicago Convention from July 16-18, 1999, where the *Wizard* Fan Awards ceremony will take place! All winners walk away with one of these nifty-swell award trophies by the sculpture and toy master himself: Clayburn Moore of Moore Creations!

EXAMPLE: IT'S LIKE THIS, SUPERFAN. JUST CHECK ONE ENTRY PER CATEGORY OR CHECK "WRITE-IN" AND WRITE SOMEONE IN. IT'S SO EASY, EVEN MOST STARS OF THE TV SHOW "FRIENDS" CAN DO IT!

FAVORITE WRITER

- ❑ Kurt Busiek
- ❑ Garth Ennis
- ❑ Grant Morrison
- ✔ Kevin Smith
- ❑ Mark Waid
- ❑ write-in _____

ADVISORY: WE PICKED KEVIN SMITH'S NAME OUT OF THE PROVERBIAL HAT FOR THIS EXAMPLE. AND IT'S JUST AN EXAMPLE. VOTE FOR WHOEVER THE HECK YOU WANT!

Make sure and hustle up! Your deadline is March 1, 1999! Once again, that address is:

***Wizard* Fan Awards**
c/o Wizard Entertainment
P.O. Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

DO IT TODAY.

Voting puts hair on your chest!

SHADY LADY

Japan's 'Catwoman' stalks the Gray City skyline

Any similarity between the characters and locations of *Batman* and *Shadow Lady: Dangerous Love* are purely intentional.

Aimi Komori, a.k.a. Shadow Lady, is a nubile ball of superpowered mischief who delights in taunting the police and streaking across the skyline of Gray City.

Gray City is a baroque burg of majestic gothic skyscrapers and crumbing ghettoes, of wealthy playboys and dirt-poor lowlifes. It's a glittering metropolis of beauty, but one fraught with danger once the sun goes down. All that stands between the law-abiding citizens of Gray City and the criminals who prey on them is the larger-than-life superpowered Shadow Lady. Unfortunately, she isn't interested in the job. She's too busy carving out a career as a cat-burglar!

By day, Shadow Lady is an attractive young woman named Aimi. Alas, Aimi has a little hang-up when it comes to talking to men: Her acute shyness reduces her to a blushing mute whenever an attractive male addresses her. This extreme timidity drives Aimi nuts, but, thanks to the help of a little demon-boy sidekick named De-Mo (think of him as a perverted Bat-Mite), she has an all-too perfect outlet.

For when Aimi dons the magical eye-shadow given her by De-Mo, she becomes Shadow Lady, a saucy super girl with none of Aimi's inhibitions and twice her exuberance. She also acquires a number of superpowers suited to her persona, such as Shadow Bust, which "bounces delightfully and clouds the minds of men," or Shadow Butt, which "wiggles and clouds the minds of men." It's fairly safe to say that every inch of Shadow Lady clouds the minds of men.

Overwhelmed by id with no superego in sight, Shadow Lady enters a life of crime. In the first issue, she penetrates a daunting museum security system and passes by a number of priceless artifacts—all to snag a cheap little trinket in the gift shop. She isn't after wealth and power—she just wants a good time and a little attention.

Shadow Lady's carefree nights of teasing cops and stealing oddities end when a dashing young man comes into Aimi's life. He's Bright Honda—and she's desperately in love with him. Unfortunately, Honda is a formidable inspector who has been sent to Gray City to collar Shadow Lady! Through a number of battles, Honda falls in love with Shadow Lady and resolves to reform her, which is bad news for Aimi—she doesn't believe a man who would be attracted to the exciting Shadow Lady could love a timid little thing like her. And so Shadow Lady and Bright continue their nightly deadly dance, while Aimi tries to find a way to break out of her shell.

Shadow Lady stands as creator Masakazu Katsura's homage to Batman, and most particularly to his archnemesis, Catwoman. The shades of Gotham are never far away from this manga; the influences of Gotham City and her Dark Knight are easily seen in the crumbling spires and battlements of Gray City, in the gadget-

SAUCY! This lady's "Shadow Bust" can cloud men's minds.

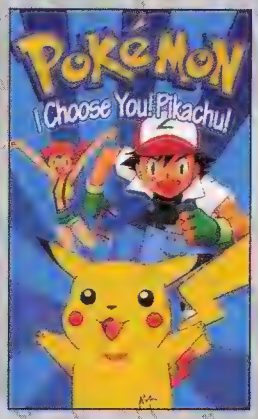
BY PAUL SUDLOW

ANIMEPICK

ANIME FILM OF THE MONTH

Pokémon: I Choose You! Pikachu!

(Viz Video and Pioneer Entertainment, 75 minutes, $14.98 dubbed)



Young Ash dreams of becoming a great Pokémon master. To realize his dream, he must capture and train 150 Pokémon (or Pocket Monsters). He sets out on his quest with a cute little electric Pokémon named Pikachu and a girl named Misty. Additional challenges are posed by Team Rocket, a gang of Pokémon kidnappers. Since they covet Ash's Pikachu, Ash and Team Rocket cross paths many times, seldom to the advantage of the bad guys.

For those viewers who missed the beginning of "Pokémon," here's a chance to catch the first three episodes. They serve as a great primer for the show, establishing Ash's quest and the strategy of Pokémon battle. There's even a cute little music video at the end: a sort of rap-pop Pokémon roll-call.

Though "Pokémon" is definitely a children's show, there is something subversively infectious about the charming Pokémon. They have a goggly-eyed, wacky earnestness about them which makes them extremely appealing and amusing for all to watch—particularly when they yell out their own names as they challenge their foes. "Koffing!" "Ekanszzzz!" Such fierce cuteness will soften the hearts of all but the most cynical of critics.■

PIKA-PI! Furball Pikachu has a one-word vocabulary. Learn it.

laden crimefighting style of Honda, and, of course, in Shadow Lady herself—an orphan who lost both her parents at a young age. There's even—shudder—a Bat-Mite. Of course, this Bat-Mite busies himself by peeking at his mistress in the shower.

Masakazu Katsura is known in manga circles around the world as a master good-girl artist, and he deserves the moniker—his girls are darned cute! He isn't above poking fun at himself, either; Shadow Lady strikes so many dramatic and sexy action poses in the first issue that even the normally lecherous De-Mo tires of the sport: "Is it absolutely necessary to pose every single time...?" he says with a pained expression on his little face.

Though it's a rather one-dimensional comic at the start, there is an exuberant sense of amoral joy about Shadow Lady which makes it a delight to read. It's reckless, naughty, smash-up-the-furniture fun. The cute girls don't hurt, either. But Katsura is also a skilled storyteller. Most of his tales—such as *Shadow Lady* and *Video Girl Ai*—begin on light notes, but often unfold into increasingly complex stories populated with well-rounded characters who eventually demand an emotional investment from the reader.

There's no guarantee *Shadow Lady* will rise to incredible heights—it wasn't one of Katsura's great successes during its original run in the *Weekly Boys' Jump* comics anthology—but it at least begins to rise to the challenge. The frivolous tone of the early issues takes a turn down a darker—and increasingly interesting—corridor in future chapters. Artifacts from the demon world escape into the world of Gray City, and Shadow Lady must hunt them down to save De-Mo from a demon-imposed death sentence. The romance-of-sworn-enemies angle can't alone sustain the comic forever, after all, and the upcoming brew of occult-tinged drama and sassy comedy promises to be a tasty concoction.

Katsura obviously paced *Shadow Lady* to run much longer than it did, but unfortunately *Jump*'s editors cut it short because it didn't get the enthusiastic fan response that his previous hit, *Video Girl Ai*, did. As a result, the conclusion is a bit rushed. But Dark Horse won't have to face this problem for a while yet—assuming *Shadow Lady* continues its run. W

Freelance writer Paul Sudlow suspects most American superheroines have had the powerful Shadow Bust for years.

F.Y.I.

INFO

Masakazu Katsura's *Shadow Lady: Dangerous Love* is being published by Dark Horse Comics–translations and layout massaging courtesy of Studio Proteus. Its seven-issue run began last October at $2.50 per issue. There is no anime version of *Shadow Lady*, either in America or Japan.

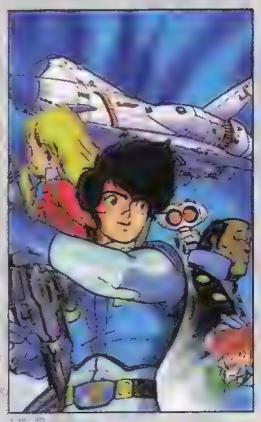
It is almost certain Dark Horse will eventually publish a graphic novel compiling the issues released in the *Dangerous Love* series. According to Dark Horse rep Shawna Ervin-Gore, there is a real possibility that Katsura's gorgeous color art–dropped from the regular run to keep prices down–will be reproduced in the graphic novel. It's a definite treat for Katsura fans–that art hasn't been published in its original color format since the series first ran in *Jump* back in 1995.

Fans of *Shadow Lady* should definitely check out Katsura's *Video Girl Ai*, which is running in Viz's *Animerica Extra*.

MANGAPICKS

MUST-READ JAPANESE COMICS SHIPPING IN JANUARY

Crusher Joe #1
STUDIO IRONCAT



The Crushers are an organization of mercenary troubleshooters who come to the aid of those able to pay. Joe's Crusher team—made up of himself, cute Alfin, veteran Talos and young Ricky—is hired to track a ghost ship that disappeared three years ago. Naturally, they're not the only ones interested in the ship's cargo! Creator Haruka Takachiho is a long-time icon of anime: president of Studio Nue (designer of many of anime's most famous battle craft, including the Macross Valkyrie), a prolific science-fiction author and creator of the infamous manga heroines the Dirty Pair. **$2.95**

Ashen Victor trade paperback
VIZ COMICS

Return to the dystopian world of Yukito Kishiro's Battle Angel Alita in an all-new, independent storyline. Life is tough in the Scrapyard, but the often murderous sport motorball gives the people something to cheer about. Nicknamed the Crash King because he wipes out in every race, motorballer Snev is derided by his manager and teammates alike. But Snev becomes a pawn in a plot to change motorball forever, and the only question is whether he gets destroyed in the process. Kishiro departs from his usual art style to present a tale drawn in the stark lines reminiscent of American artist Frank Miller's *Sin City*. **$14.95**

Blade of the Immortal: Dreamsong trade paperback
DARK HORSE COMICS

Manji is a ronin warrior cursed to walk the Earth as an immortal—the bloodworms which course through his body prevent any wound from being fatal until he's killed 1,000 evil men. Makie is a geisha with the instincts and training of a master swordsman. She can't keep up her double life forever, though, and must decide which path to follow once and for all. Unfortunately, her decision brings her into the orbit of Manji, and that could mean trouble for him! For mature readers only. **$12.95**

Slayers #4
CPM MANGA

Lovely princess Isabella has come to town to recruit more boytoys and beefcakes for her all-male harem, but when knight-errant Gourry turns down Isabella's kind offer to join the club, she kidnaps him instead. Now fireball-slinging mage Lina Inverse must infiltrate Isabella's castle to rescue her buddy—that is, if she can get around Isabella's head bodyguard, the aptly named Swanky Hank! **$2.95**

Gunsmith Cats: Bean Bandit
DARK HORSE COMICS

Chicago-based bounty hunter Rally Vincent has recovered from her drug-laced encounter with Italian assassin Goldie, but the cops have rescinded her license to pack heat until her doc decides she won't have a psychotic flashback. Naturally, this setback puts a damper on her business, so Rally decides to go after the guy who helped Goldie escape—Bean Bandit, ace courier for cargo too hot for FedEx to handle. Keeping up with Bean isn't a simple matter, though Rally manages to see quite a lot of the fellow while staking out his closet! For mature readers only. **$2.95**

Ranma 1/2 Vol. 12 trade paperback
VIZ COMICS

In the wacky gender-bender world of Ranma Saotome, life is never simple. Ranma, still suffering from the strength-draining attack technique of his father's lecherous sensei, must master another new martial-arts move to beat the old geezer and recover his strength. Chinese beauty Shampoo returns from a trip to China with a bell haunted by a ghost cat looking for a bride—and we all know how much Ranma likes cats! Ranma's betrothed Akane takes swimming lessons from her Hawaii-obsessed school principal—in a shark-infested swimming pool, no less. And pop Genma goes panda when he decides to lounge around a young boy's house posing as his pet! Told ya it was wacky. **$15.95** ■

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH by Lars Pearson

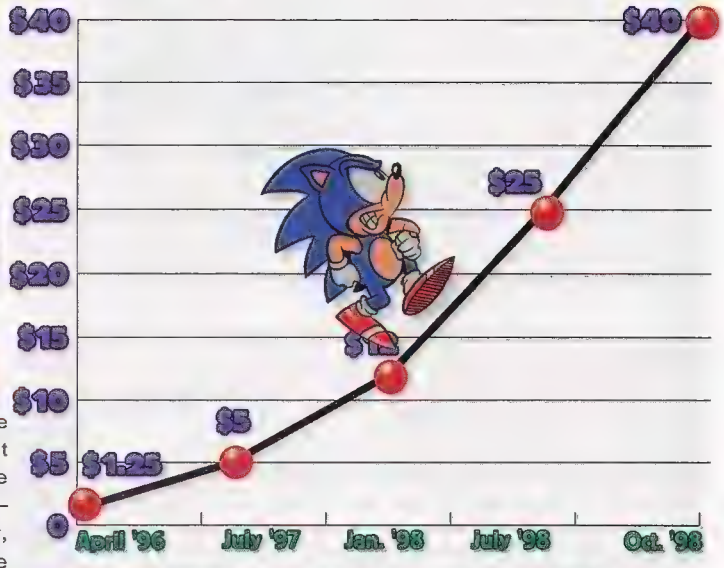
MARKET WATCH

MANGA: THE QUIET REVOLUTION

Japanese genre sees across-the-board interest

Looks like everyone's turning Japanese these days. Slowly but surely, manga—that unique Japanese comic storytelling style punctuated by big eyes and buckets of blood—gains popularity with American readers. Now, through quiet and steady movement, some extremely low-printed manga back issues are going for big bucks. To wit:

• **Darkminds (Image)**—Its picture is next to "sleeper hit" in the dictionary. This sci-fi-flavored serial-killer story has added readers so fast that *Darkminds* currently has 50 percent more readers than there were copies of #1 printed. What's that mean? Relative to demand, copies of *Darkminds* #1 will always be scarce as hell, and its current $8 value should at least hold...or probably increase.



SONIC...BOOM! Since its April 1996 debut, *Sonic the Hedgehog* has seen its value rise by 3,200 percent. Take that, stock market!

• **Blade of the Immortal (Dark Horse)**—We warned you about this title a year ago—and it's neck-and-neck with *Darkminds* as the hottest back-issue manga book. *Blade of the Immortal* #1, with its dramatic story about a warrior who must kill 1,000 evil men before he can enjoy death, has already mushroomed to $12. *BOTI* #2 easily goes for $8.

• **Oh My Goddess! (Dark Horse), Dirty Pair (Eclipse/Viz/Dark Horse)**—Curiously, manga humor titles take a bit longer to pop. Still, *Oh My Goddess!* #1, the story of a young boy who dials a wrong number and summons some playful young goddesses, has crept up to $10. But issue #1 of the Eclipse *Dirty Pair* series, with art by American manga star Adam Warren, has easily topped that, heading for the $15 range.

• **Akira (Epic/Marvel)** and **Ranma 1/2 (Viz)**—A strong sign of manga's success is that it has

SPEED LINES KILL Manga is sneaking up on many American readers.

established its own "Golden Age"—with books that *refuse* to go down in value. The late '80s-era manga benchmark *Akira* is always stable. And *Ranma 1/2* #1, with a story about a boy who turns into a young girl when he's splashed with cold water, is climbing to $60 thanks to a huge influx of female readers.

KID STUFF NOW BIG BUCKS

You let your kid brother read them ragged, trample them and soil them with that vile onion soup your parents insisted on serving. Now, "funny books" are getting revenge for years of abuse. Here's a few you'll want to drag out of your long-forgotten comic vault:

• **Sonic the Hedgehog (Archie)**—Most mainstream comic readers don't follow Archie books. So *Sonic the Hedgehog*, based on the popular video game, was left largely to destructive young-uns who've never heard the term "mylar snug." Since so many copies got mutilated, a top-condition *Sonic the Hedgehog* #1 now runs—you ready for this?—$40 to $50! Issues #2-#3 run about $15 each, and the rest are easily $1-$2 over cover.

• **Ewoks** and **Droids (Marvel)**—Along the same lines, *Ewoks* #1 and *Droids* #1, two rare "Star Wars" tie-ins that were part of Marvel's short-lived Star Comics line, are going for $15 to $20 apiece. Many *Star Wars* completists say they're picking up the books...even though some admit the stories "kinda suck."

• **Beavis and Butt-head** and **Ren and Stimpy (Marvel)**—Slightly more (and we use this term very loosely) "mature" readers still enjoy the canceled *Beavis and Butt-head* and *Ren and Stimpy*, two well-distributed Marvel books. They aren't high-priced (a *Beavis and Butt-head* #1 will run you $6), but both series still trade heavily—more than most canceled series can say.

TOP COW RE-COVERS

Seeing double recently on Top Cow comics? You're not going nuts.

Heaven knows those wacky folks at Top Cow love variants (remember 11 covers on *The Darkness* #11?), and the company just did a cover split for all its November-shipping books.

Retailers place orders for new comics two months before they ship,

TOP 10 CREATORS

FAN FAVORITES

These are the creators the fans crave. Creators whose name on a cover sells the book. *Wizard*'s Top Ten Creators lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey. Artists include pencilers and painters.

WRITERS

1. Mark Waid
Captain America, Kingdom

2. Kevin Smith
Daredevil, Clerks

3. Kurt Busiek
Iron Man, Avengers

4. Grant Morrison
JLA, The Invisibles

5. Garth Ennis
Preacher, Hitman

6. Joe Kelly
Deadpool, X-Men

7. Steven T. Seagle
Uncanny X-Men

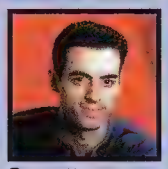
8. Dan Jurgens
Thor, Superman

9. Ron Marz
Green Lantern

10. Peter David
Supergirl, Young Justice

ARTISTS

1. Michael Turner
Fathom



2. Joe Madureira
Battle Chasers

3. Alex Ross
Superman: Peace on Earth

4. J. Scott Campbell
Danger Girl

5. George Pérez
Avengers

6. Adam Kubert
X-Men

7. Joe Quesada
Daredevil, Ash

8. Jim Lee
Divine Right

9. Andy Kubert
Captain America

10. Jae Lee
Inhumans

BURIED TREASURE

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THIS

DARK HORSE PRESENTS ANNUAL 1998

Most collectors believe *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* #1 is the first comic appearance of the teen vamp-buster. But that honor is actually held by *Dark Horse Presents Annual 1998*, an anthology that includes a Buffy short story.

The *Annual* is currently going for $8-10, and it would defy all logic if it didn't go higher. Buffy-mania is now huge, and compared to *Buffy*'s large readership, this one-shot wasn't printed for spit. And few *Buffy* fans can resist this adventure with the infamous line, "Slayer's got a big butt!" Don't miss out. ■ LP

PHOTOS: BUSIEK, KELLY, SMITH, DAVID, ADAM KUBERT, JIM LEE, MADUREIRA, ROSS, TURNER, WAID, QUESADA BY PAUL SCHRADER; MORRISON BY BOB MARTIN; ANDY KUBERT BY C. BLANKENHORN; PÉREZ BY BOB SMITH. SEAGLE COURTESY OF STEVE SEAGLE; JURGENS BY WIZARD. CAMPBELL BY JOHN W. MACDONOUGH; MARZ BY JOSEPH SCHUYLER. JAE LEE BY WIZARD ENTERTAINMENT.

then reorder more copies if they sell out. In an unannounced surprise move, stores got "regular" covers with their initial November Top Cow orders, but received a different cover on all Top Cow books that they *reordered*. The reorder covers don't feature totally original art, but instead feature covers saturated with Marc Silvestri-drawn Darklings, those annoying, snot-nosed pests from *The Darkness*. The covers' coloring will also be altered to make for easy identification.

The Cow's theory? The company wants to point out to retailers that they often reorder Top Cow books, and they should increase initial orders. The Cow hopes this gimmick illustrates that point.

Top Cow titles affected are *Fathom* #4, *Darkness* #20, *Witchblade* #28, *Tales of the Darkness* #4, *Spirit of the Tao* #6 and *Ascension* #11.

DOUBLE VISION Top Cow went variant-crazy in November.

ONE IN A 'MILLION'

A quickie note about *DC One Million*, DC's most recent all-universe crossover:

Even though it went 1,000,000 issues into the future, *DC One Million* was not treated as a dream story, an "Elseworlds" tale or anything else that made it retroactively irrelevant. And the series generated a slew of potentially important characters, including a new Hourman (already in his own ongoing series) and an entire new crop of Justice Leaguers. Imagine the interest if DC decided to, for example, replace the regular Batman with his future counterpart.

All of DC's #1,000,000 books—and especially the *One Million* mini-series itself—sold well, so lots of copies are available. But with all the inherent potential in all the new characters, anything "Million"-related ranks as a target for heat. Keep looking to the future, kids.

In Lars-Man *#1,000,000,* Wizard *Price Guide manager Lars Pearson fought the menace of the evil Deadline. Lars lost.*

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Comickaze Comics
& Sportscards
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Golden Apple Comics
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TOP 10 comics

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. These are the books ringing the registers this month...**

1 DAREDEVIL #1

WRITER: Kevin Smith
ARTISTS: Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti

Well, it took a whoppin' three months or so, but it looks like the new *Daredevil* #1 finally landed itself in the ol' one-hole. Wonderin' why? Let us count the reasons. First, it's a brand-new and intrigue-stuffed take on an old Marvel mainstay. Second, it's got beyond-beautiful art. Third? There's Kevin Smith, the famed "Chasing Amy" screenwriter who's writing it. Yeah. That Smith guy might have a little something to do with it. **LAST MONTH: 10**

2 JAY AND SILENT BOB #1

WRITER: Kevin Smith
ARTIST: Duncan Fegredo

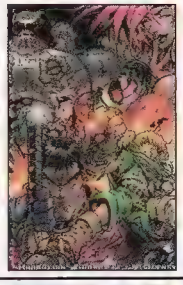
So *Jay and Silent Bob* #1 hit stands one day. Cover price: $2.95. Six weeks later and after yet another lightning-fast sellout on a Kevin Smith book, it's 12 bucks. That's 12 bucks. In six weeks. News flash, Rockefeller: YOU CAN BUY A SECOND PRINTING! They are available, y'know! Don't you watch the news? If not, here's a financial report: Shares of Kevin Smith closed at 53 7/8 today on the NASDAQ. **LAST MONTH: NOT RATED**

3 SPIDER-GIRL #1

WRITER: Tom DeFalco
ARTISTS: Pat Oliffe and Al Williamson

Spider-Girl has several things going for her. She's a new, fresh face that attracts new readers. And this li'l "What If...?" upstart is the only daughter of Peter Parker, which keeps old-line Spider-fans intrigued. And she's got better legs than Spider-Man ever did. **LAST MONTH: 6**

4 BATTLE CHASERS #1



WRITERS: Joe Madureira and Munier Sharrieff
ARTISTS: Joe Madureira and Tom McWeeney

Shares of Madureira stock closed at 48 1/2 today, explaining this book's drop. Fortunately, leading indicators show that *Battle Chasers* is still the coolest-looking thing this side of an open window into the girl's locker room. Analysts predict healthy dividends...if the book gets on schedule. **LAST MONTH: 1**

5 CRIMSON #1

WRITER: Brian Augustyn
ARTISTS: Humberto Ramos and Sandra Hope

Speaking of schedules, know this: Humberto Ramos knows how to read a calendar. While the other new-'n'-hot Cliffhanger books have suffered from extreme lateness, *Crimson* keeps a monthly schedule. Fans like that. And more fans are startin' to pick up on this book. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

6 WITCHBLADE #24 (RANDY GREEN COVER)

WRITERS: David Wohl and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Pearson, Green and Co.

It's official: Randy Green's got what it takes! When super-duper star-artist Michael Turner left *Witchblade* after #25, many thought the book would collapse. But new art guy Green has done pretty well for himself, and now completists are lookin' to this early Green *Witchblade* variant. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

7 INHUMANS #1

WRITER: Paul Jenkins
ARTIST: Jae Lee

Speaking of schedules, anyone remember Jae Lee's last monthly work? That's right: The 12th of Never. But now Lee is locked and loaded for 12 monthly issues of *Inhumans* and he's makin' readers pee themselves with drop-dead gorgeous art. 'Scuse us while we change underwear. **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

8 BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER #1

WRITER: Andi Watson
ARTIST: Joe Bennett and Rick Ketcham

That's what high school's all about: Algebra, bad lunch, infidelity...and stakin' vampires through the heart. Sounds like a good TV show and a hit comic. (Psst! This issue was available with two covers: comic art or photo. The photo cover's selling better. Pass it on!) **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

9 TOMB RAIDER/WITCHBLADE #1

WRITER: Michael Turner
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and Joe Weems V

The new *Witchblade/Tomb Raider* comic just hit. So collectors figure...they'll go get the first one they never picked up before? Where the hell were you last year? Don't you pay attention? Bet you don't even know what Lara Croft stock closed at today, do ya?! **LAST MONTH: N.R.**

10 UNCANNY X-MEN #350

WRITER: Steven T. Seagle
ARTIST: Madureira, Smith and Co.

It's an anniversary issue. It's the "Trial of Gambit." It's a major turning point. It's got a cover so shiny, it'll make ya go blind. And it's got art by Joe Madureira, the greatest Portuguese-American comic artist ever. What more you need ta know? Everybody wants this comic! **LAST MONTH: 4**

THE HIGHEST-ORDERED BOOKS FOR THE MONTH OF **NOVEMBER**

TOP 100

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by Diamond Comic Distributors.

A new Brotherhood of Evil Mutants lineup debuted in *Uncanny X-Men* #363.

1. Uncanny X-Men #363 (Marvel)
2. Uncanny X-Men #364 (Marvel)
3. X-Men #83 (Marvel)
4. Amazing Spider-Man #1 (Marvel)
5. Peter Parker: Spider-Man #1 (Marvel)
6. Spawn #80 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
7. Fathom #4 (Top Cow/Image)
8. Wolverine #133 (Marvel)
9. Avengers #12 (Marvel)
10. JLA #25 (DC)
11. Fantastic Four #13 (Marvel)
12. Daredevil #3 (Marvel)
13. Spider-Man: Chapter One #3 (Marvel)
14. Captain America #13 (Marvel)
15. Avengers Forever #2 (Marvel)
16. Mutant X #4 (Marvel)
17. Webspinners: Tales of Spider-Man #1 (Marvel)
18. Iron Man #12 (Marvel)
19. JLA/Titans #2 (DC)
20. Thor #7 (Marvel)
21. The Darkness #20 (Top Cow/Image)
22. Witchblade #28 (Top Cow/Image)
23. Spider-Girl #4 (Marvel)
24. Generation X #47 (Marvel)
25. Superman: Peace on Earth (DC)
26. Green Lantern #108 (DC)
27. X-Force #85 (Marvel)
28. Curse of the Spawn #27 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
29. X-Force #86 (Marvel)
30. X-Men: Liberators #3 (Marvel)
31. X-Man #47 (Marvel)
32. Marvel Annual '98: Iron Man and Captain America (Marvel)
33. Thunderbolts #22 (Marvel)
34. Captain America: Sentinel of Liberty #5 (Marvel)
35. Batman/Hellboy/Starman #1 (DC)
36. Cable #63 (Marvel)
37. Action Comics #750 (DC)
38. KISS: The Psycho Circus #15 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
39. Marvel Annual '98: Captain America and Citizen V (Marvel)
40. Black Panther #3 (Marvel)
41. Incredible Hulk #472 (Marvel)
42. Inhumans #3 (Marvel)
43. Superman #141 (DC)
44. Buffy the Vampire Slayer #3 (Dark Horse)
45. Punisher #3 (Marvel)
46. Slingers #2 (Marvel)
47. Superman: The Man of Steel #85 (DC)
48. Batman #561 (DC)
49. Young Justice #4 (DC)
50. Superman & Batman: Generations #1 (DC)
51. Nightwing #27 (DC)
52. Tales of the Darkness #4 (Top Cow/Image)
53. Detective Comics #728 (DC)
54. A-Next #4 (Marvel)
55. Gen^{13} #35 (WildStorm/Image)
56. Preacher #45 (Vertigo/DC)
57. Superman: The Man of Tomorrow #12 (DC)
58. Star Wars: Crimson Empire II #1 (Dark Horse)
59. Flash #144 (DC)
60. Deadpool #24 (Marvel)
61. Darkminds #5 (Image)
62. Superman: Doomsday Wars #3 (DC)
63. J2 #4 (Marvel)
64. Alpha Flight #18 (Marvel)
65. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #81 (DC)
66. Lady Pendragon #1 (Image)
67. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #114 (DC)
68. Martian Manhunter #2 (DC)
69. Robin #60 (DC)
70. Catwoman #64 (DC)
71. Birds of Prey #1 (DC)
72. Supergirl #28 (DC)
73. Legends of the DC Universe #12 (DC)
74. Battle Chasers Collected Edition #1 (Cliffhanger/Image)
75. Wonder Woman #140 (DC)
76. Marvel Remix: Fantastic Four #1 (Marvel)
77. Gen^{13}: Magical Drama Queen Roxy #2 (WildStorm/Image)
78. Star Wars: Mara Jade—By The Emperor's Hand #4 (D.H.)
79. Stone #4 (Avalon/Image)
80. Young Justice Secret Files #1 (DC)
81. Lady Death #11 (Chaos!)
82. Batman Chronicles #15 (DC)
83. Starman #49 (DC)
84. Rampaging Hulk #6 (Marvel)
85. Superman/Silver Banshee #2 (DC)
86. Star Wars: Jedi Academy—Leviathan #2 (D.H.)
87. Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi—Redemption #5 (D.H.)
88. Heroes For Hire #19 (Marvel)
89. Aquaman #51 (DC)
90. Batman/Judge Dredd: Die Laughing #2 (DC)
91. Batman: Dark Knight of the Round Table #2 (DC)
92. WildCORE #9 (WildStorm/Image)
93. Vampirella: Hell On Earth #3 (Harris)
94. Hellcop #2 (Avalon/Image)
95. Batman/Toyman #3 (DC)
96. Purgatori #3 (Chaos!)
97. Starman 80-Page Giant #1 (DC)
98. Azrael: Agent of the Bat #48 (DC)
99. Grendel: Black, White, & Red #1 (Dark Horse)
100. Hitman #33 (DC)

TOP 100 HIGHLIGHTS

SPIDER-MAN SNARES BIG HITS!

Amazing Spider-Man #1, Peter Parker: Spider-Man #1, Webspinners: Tales of Spider-Man #1 (No. 4, 5, 17)

He's baaaaack! After a one-month hiatus, the Spider-Man relaunch–a paring down to two "in continuity" titles–snared the web-slinger his highest ranking in many years. The two core Spider-Man titles clocked in really big, and even the retrospective *Webspinners* scored well.

Superman: Peace on Earth (No. 25)

Now hear this: Never–and we mean never ever never–has a book with a $9.95 price tag scored so high in "Top 100." Sure, Superman's cool and all, but the real driving force? Painter Alex Ross (*Kingdom Come*), the only creator who can do a $10 oversized book and still make it sell like hotcakes. Face it: Ross is in a league of his own.

Batman/Hellboy/Starman #1 (No. 35)

Batman has the name. Hellboy creator Mike Mignola has the fame. And Starman's got a neat "gravity rod." Together, this crossover comic charted as November's No. 1 Batman book. The ranks of Batfans were bolstered by writer James Robinson (*Starman*), and the lovely lunatic fringe that always shows up for anything drawn by Mignola.

Slingers #2 (No. 46)

As Spidey leaps for joy, his spidery spin-offs are squirming. Last month, fueled by four "alternate interior" variants, *Slingers* had a No. 6 ranking. But this month's slump to No. 46 is a big one, especially since *Slingers* #2 has a two-cover split to (hopefully) offset some of the loss. The good news? Early buzz on *Slingers* is good, and we may soon see the title climbing back up the charts...and maybe even a water spout or two.

Lady Pendragon #1 (No. 66)

Huh? It's an unknown property that lacks name-value creators. So how the hell did *Lady Pendragon* hit "Top 100" at all? Try Matthew Hawkins, the book's creator and a veteran comic marketer. Well before *Lady Pendragon* premiered, Hawkins marshaled an armada of Lady Pendragon action figures, variant covers and exclusive deals. He scheduled an extensive tour through dozens of stores with portfolio reviews for fans. If enthusiasm and shrewd marketing leads to sales, other publishers could learn a bit from Lady Pendragon.

Battle Chasers Collected Edition #1 (No. 74)

Further proof of *Battle Chasers*' power, as if you needed it: This book scored No. 74. And it's just a *reprint* of *Battle Chasers* #1-#2! Even though *Collected* #1 retails for $6–a buck more than the originals' cumulative cover price–it's still a bargain compared to the cost of those now-pricey first prints.

CLOSE-UP LOOK

Break it on down now! Here's a look at March's top-selling books in a couple of categories, with their overall Diamond Comic Distributors "Top 300" rankings in parentheses.

SUPER, MAN! Faster than a speeding bullet, *Superman: Peace on Earth* flew to the top of the one-shot chart.

TOP 10 ONE-SHOTS

1. Superman: Peace on Earth (DC, No. 25)
2. Marvel Annual '98: Iron Man and Captain America (Marvel, No. 32)
3. Marvel Annual '98: Captain America and Citizen V (Marvel, No. 39)
4. Starman 80-Page Giant #1 (DC, No. 97)
5. Aria Preview #1 (Avalon/Image, No. 104)
6. Vertigo: Winter's Edge II (Vertigo/DC, No. 110)
7. DCU Holiday Bash III (DC, No. 129)
8. Painkiller Jane #0 (Event, No. 134)
9. Battlebooks: Wolverine (Marvel, No. 172)
10. Battlebooks: Spider-Man (Marvel, No. 176)

TOP 10 "COLOR" COMICS

1. "Green" Lantern #108 (DC, No. 26)
2. "Black" Panther #3 (Marvel, No. 40)
3. Star Wars: "Crimson" Empire II #1 (D.H., No. 58)
4. Star Wars: Mara "Jade"–By the Emperor's Hand #4 (D.H., No. 78)
5. Superman/"Silver" Banshee #2 (DC, No. 85)
6. Grendel "Black, White, & Red" #1 (D.H., No. 99)
7. Conan : "Scarlet" Sword #2 (Marvel, No. 141)
8. Age of "Bronze" #1 (Image, No. 208)
9. "Gold" Digger #46 (Antarctic, No. 225)
10. Warrior Nun "Black & White" #15 (Antarctic, No. 243)

LOOKING BACK

What topped the charts FIVE YEARS AGO?

1. X-Men #30 (Marvel)
2. Spawn #20 (Todd McFarlane/Image)
3. Uncanny X-Men #310 (Marvel)
4. Beavis & Butt-head #1 (Marvel)
5. X-Factor #100 (Marvel)
6. Superman #87 (DC)
7. Wolverine #79 (Marvel)
8. Gambit (1st mini-series) #4 (Marvel)
9. CyberForce (series) #3 (Top Cow/Image)
10. Adventures of Superman #510 (DC)

Beavis & Butt-head as the No. 4 book? Outselling *Wolverine?*

Yep. "Beavis & Butt-Head" was once a cartoon juggernaut that could make "South Park" look like "Grape Ape" reruns. So when Marvel debuted the comic adaptation, TV fans turned out in huge numbers. B&B's book petered out after 28 issues as interest in the show slacked off, but ya know what? People who dig humor comics still pick up back issues for a buck or two. Huh-huh. Cool.

EMPTY-V This "Beavis & Butt-head" cartoon was once an MTV-and comic-sensation. Now, it's all reruns.

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C.B.I.Q.

YOU THINK YOU'RE SO SMART...

COMIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

Hey, kiddies, it's once again time to line up and test your trivia mettle against an outlandish grading scale of our choosing. This month, see how you rank against bad Christmas presents. You know what we're talking about. The kind of bad presents that make you want to move somewhere they don't even HAVE Christmas. Like Newark.

SCORE	RANK
0-4	*Music. When Uncle George or Aunt Freda picks your tunes, you're bound to end up with the new John Mellencamp travesty. On cassette.*
5-9	*Socks. No gift says "Thought involved: zero" like a nice pair of socks.*
10-14	*Gift certificates. Wow, that $5 will sure go a long way at Nobody Beats the Wiz, Grandma. Thanks a million.*
15	*Donations. "$25 has been donated in your name to We Care About Pandas." Screw the pandas, that coulda bought two CDs!*

1 Jean Grey has long fought the forces of evil in her superhero identity of...er, well, Jean Grey. But lately she's been donning the costume of her former super-identity...
A) ...Phoenix
B) ...Marvel Girl
C) ...Dark Phoenix
D) ...Dixie D-Cup, Cowgirl for Hire

2 Spunky schoolgirl Akiko not only has her very own comic book, *Akiko*, she's also caught the eye of a dashing young prince named...
A) ...Moptoppit
B) ...Froptoppit
C) ...Dopfoppit
D) ...Jimmy

3 Over the course of the post-"Heroes Reborn" (*shudder*) monthly *Captain America* title, Cap's used a total of how many different shields?
A) Two; his standard shield and a new, electronic one.
B) Three; his standard shield, WWII-era shield and an electronic one.
C) Four; his standard, WWII-era, electronic and adamantium shields.
D) Apparently just a panty shield, if *Cap* #2 was any indication. Ugh. Like your shield much, Cap?

4 Thor's back with his own monthly series. Hurrah! But which heavily armored baddie handed the God of Thunder his ass in the very first new issue?
A) Destroyer
B) Crimson Dynamo
C) Firebrand
D) That mechanical owl from "Clash of the Titans." His name escapes us, but he was like the mechanical equivalent of Orko from "He-Man."

5 In Viz Comics' *Maison Ikkoku*, hapless youngster Yusaku Godai has the hots for which unobtainable beauty?
A) His sister
B) His tennis instructor
C) His apartment manager
D) First season-era Kelly Bundy. Denim, nummy!

6 Geez...how to phrase this...? Okay. Name the *Battle Chasers* character with the...the, um...oh, just name her.
A) Red Sonja
B) Red Monika
C) Red Sophia
D) Dixie D-Cup, Cowgirl for Hire

7 Which Justice Leaguer was NOT a member of the very, very first JLA back when DC comics were much, much sillier?
A) Aquaman
B) Black Canary
C) Martian Manhunter
D) Superman

8 The Savage Dragon's fought a lot of fairly ridiculous bad guys, but the living brain of which dictator has given him the most trouble?
a) Adolf Hitler
b) Saddam Hussein
c) Benito Mussolini
d) Jim Shooter

9 Marrow's a pretty surly little X-Man, but love can soothe even this savage beast. Which fellow mutant does she have the hots for?
A) Archangel
B) Beast
C) Wolverine
D) Leech

10 Holy...um...surprising thing! As of *Wolverine* #126, the ol' Canucklehead is married to which enemy from his past?
A) Viper
B) Lady Deathstrike
C) Deathbird
D) Mariko

11 Rick Jones' bachelor party came to a very awkward end when the star of the evening's stag film turned out to be...
A) ...his fiancée, Marlo
B) ...Betty Banner
C) [illegible]
D) ...Rick Jones

12 The first time Spider-Man tackled Mr. Big's Enforcers, what was their three-man lineup?
A) Fancy Dan, Ox, Montana
B) Fancy Dan, Rhino, Montana
C) Scorpion, Rhino, Trapster
D) Scorpion, Ox, Electro

13 Aztek had a promising future in the current incarnation of the JLA, but he left when he learned his existence was owed to:
A) Lex Luthor
B) Darkseid
C) Ra's Al-Ghul
D) Mommy Aztek, Daddy Aztek and a bottle of Old Crow

14 Obviously still humiliated by her solo series, Dazzler has been spending most of her time lately in:
A) The Savage Land
B) The Mojoverse
C) The Blue Area of the Moon
D) "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine." No one'll ever see her there.

15 In Wolverine's first comic book appearance ever, the Hulk was more concerned with beating the snot out of a very different kind of rampaging beast:
A) Man-Thing
B) Wendigo
C) The Hunter in Darkness
D) George Michael, who kept offering to "shake Hulk's hand"

ANSWERS

Candy-asses can peek on the next page if this is too tough...

BULLPEN LOOK BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Shakin' Bacon

It took 14 months, five border police officers, three lawyers and a mountain of paperwork, but Wizard Entertainment finally got one: a Canadian. The story began more than a year ago as we conducted a search for additional designers. Mighty Mike Bencic applied for the job, kicked ass during his interview, and landed the job. Trouble was, he was Canadian and had to get a visa to work and live in the States. "No problem" was what we were told by the lawyers who assured us that Mike would be stateside, eating apple pie and clicking a Wizard mouse in just a matter of weeks.

Wrong. Mike was stopped at the border and told the correct paperwork hadn't been filled out. So he filled it out and was told his fiancée was clear to go but he had to wait at least six months for clearance. So now, having quit his old job and left his apartment, Mike scrambled to ride out the wait (which would turn into a yearlong debacle) as he juggled three jobs, four apartments, a communications/electricity/water-severing blizzard, a broken hand and a dislocated shoulder (from the multiple moves). So was it worth it?

"I'm not really sure if it was worth it," Mike says. "I miss my igloo, Stompin' Tom Conners, Don Cherry and Tim Horton's coffee–but hey, now I get free comics."

Ah, free swag. That's why we're in this business, after all.

CANADIAN ACHIN' Was a year-long ordeal to get to Wizard worth it?

TOP 10 Top 10 Toys Based on the 'Batman: No Man's Land' Storyline

1. "Smoked near a broken gas main" Commissioner Gordon figure.
2. Mad Dog Alfred figure with "trapped under rubble" playset, including real half-eaten rat/recycled urine action feature!
3. Gotham City Public Works inaction figures with special "lean on shovels, drink coffee and don't get any damn work done" feature.
4. Poached Harvey Bullock action-less figure with "feed a family of four" cannibal action.
5. "Angry Mob Uses Earthquake as Distraction to Beat Joel Schumacher with the Dead" action playset.
6. Well-fed, Has Plenty of Fresh Water and Working Cable Television Bruce Wayne figure.
7. Kurt Russell figure with "you're ripping off 'Escape from New York'" lawsuit action.
8. Kurt Russell figure variant with "I ripped off 'Escape from New York' with 'Escape from LA'/I'm suing myself" action.
9. Pet Store Full of Half-Starved Rabid Kittens and Squirrel Monkeys Deathtrap playset.
10. JLA Playing Poker While Gotham Burns collector's boxed set.

CBIQ answers...

1. A	4. A	7. D	10. A	13. A
2. B	5. C	8. A	11. A	14. B
3. B	6. B	9. A	12. B	15. B

ONE OF THE DAMNED

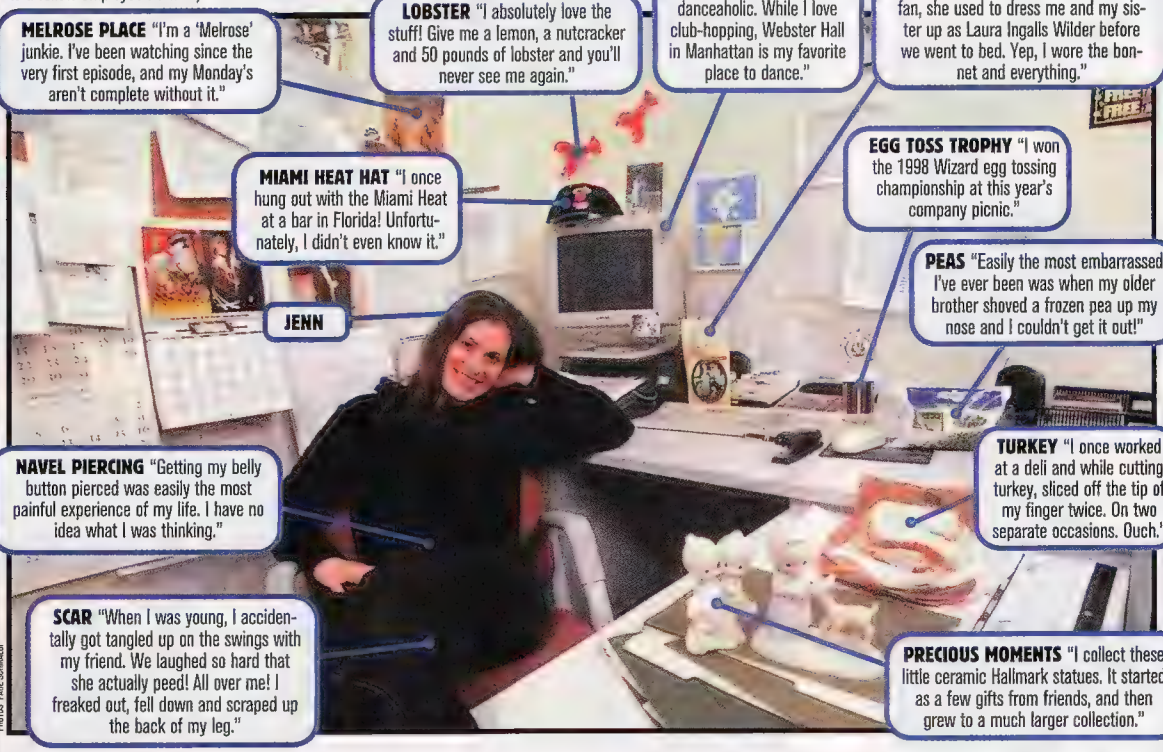
DOING HARD TIME

Jennifer Santopietro CIRCULATION MANAGER

WHY WE PAY HER: "I do all the administrative work as far as setting up the print orders for all of our titles. I also communicate with the printing plant to make sure everything runs smoothly and all the distributors get their magazines on time."

BEST OUT-OF-CONTEXT QUOTE: "I put your thing in my mouth." (In reference to a fellow employee's lunch.)

MOST BIZARRE *WIZARD* MOMENT: ""When I witnessed a co-worker stuff about 50 grapes in his mouth at one time just to see if he could do it. He had the juice from the grapes running all down his face."



MELROSE PLACE "I'm a 'Melrose' junkie. I've been watching since the very first episode, and my Monday's aren't complete without it."

LOBSTER "I absolutely love the stuff! Give me a lemon, a nutcracker and 50 pounds of lobster and you'll never see me again."

WEBSTER HALL "I'm a danceaholic. While I love club-hopping, Webster Hall in Manhattan is my favorite place to dance."

LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE "Since my mom's a huge 'Little House' fan, she used to dress me and my sister up as Laura Ingalls Wilder before we went to bed. Yep, I wore the bonnet and everything."

MIAMI HEAT HAT "I once hung out with the Miami Heat at a bar in Florida! Unfortunately, I didn't even know it."

EGG TOSS TROPHY "I won the 1998 Wizard egg tossing championship at this year's company picnic."

JENN

PEAS "Easily the most embarrassed I've ever been was when my older brother shoved a frozen pea up my nose and I couldn't get it out!"

NAVEL PIERCING "Getting my belly button pierced was easily the most painful experience of my life. I have no idea what I was thinking."

TURKEY "I once worked at a deli and while cutting turkey, sliced off the tip of my finger twice. On two separate occasions. Ouch."

SCAR "When I was young, I accidentally got tangled up on the swings with my friend. We laughed so hard that she actually peed! All over me! I freaked out, fell down and scraped up the back of my leg."

PRECIOUS MOMENTS "I collect these little ceramic Hallmark statues. It started as a few gifts from friends, and then grew to a much larger collection."

PHOTOS: PAUL SCHRADI

BULLPEN EXTRA!

HEY, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF PAT McCALLUM HERE TO BRING YOU THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE *FOURTH ANNUAL WIZARD HALLOWEEN COSTUME PARTY!* SO KICK BACK, ENJOY THE PHOTOS AND KNOW THAT AS FAR AS COMIC FANS GO, THEY DON'T GET GEEKIER THAN US. AND NO BIG, GREEN HELMET JOKES.

4TH ANNUAL HALLOWEEN HOO-HAH!

FREAK OUT! Front center: Tom "Joker" Villante & Christine "Harley Quinn" Wisniewski (Winners of the "Come to Wizard's Party" contest). First row (l. to r.): Andrew "Loki" Kardon, Pete "Mr. Miracle" Flood, Brian "Bullseye" Cunningham, James "The Crow" Walker, Greg "Eat-Man" Orlando, Rus "Prof. Xavier" Wooton and Dan "Beast" DiGiacomo. Second row: Lore "Scully" Stevens, Jeff "Mulder" Hannes, Ben "Starman" Plavin, Lars "Tempest" Pearson, Mike "Spot" Fasolo, Jennifer "Dorothy" Cavallo and André "Cowardly Lion" Shell. Back row: Jennifer and Steve "White Trash" Blackwell, Tom "Lame-ass Ghost #1" Palmer Jr., Doug "Lame-ass Ghost #2" Goldstein, Matt "Lame-ass Ghost #3" Senreich, Pat "Whirlwind" McCallum, Nachie "Zombie" Castro and Tom "Dead Bucky" Root.

HOLD YER WATER! Price Guide Manager Lars "Tempest" Pearson.

DA WINNAHS! Tom and Christine, the winners of the "Come to Wizard's Party" contest.

TO ME, MY X-MEN! Rus "Prof. Xavier" Wooton and Dan "Beast" DiGiacomo.

FANTASTIC, ER, TWO Eileen "Invisible Woman" Creamer and Phil "Mr. Fantastic" Geller.

A LOKI PARTY Allie "Hela" Kardon and Andrew "Loki" Kardon.

FEELING GREEN Dean "Green Lantern" Galgano and Kerri "Packing-Peanut Woman" Galgano.

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE Lore "Scully" Stevens and Jeff "Mulder" Hannes.

ALL MIME James "The Crow" Walker.

A LOVE/HATE THING Jenn "Elektra" Cesca and Brian "Bullseye" Cunningham.

HBO'S OZ Meghan "Wicked Witch" Loftstrom, André "Cowardly Lion" Shell, Jennifer "Dorothy" Cavallo, Cassie "Tin Man" Lopusnak, Suzanne "Scarecrow" Hartwick.

MONKEYS! Best-costume contest winners (clockwise): Chris "Gen. Aldo" Brugnoli, Bob "Gen. Ursus" Marshall, Kevin "Cornelius" Kreh, Denise "Zira" Kreh, Steve "Dr. Zaius" Pavlisko, Raoul "Astronaut" Rivero, Cathy "Astronaut" Kreh and Janice "Kid Monkey" Kreh.

HILLBILLY LOVE Jennifer and Steve "White Trash" Blackwell.

TIME TRAVEL by RUSSELL LISSAU

MARVELING THE WORLD

'Marvels' made superheroes seem real five years ago

For the first time, comic characters truly breathed. Starting with the first issue, dated January 1994, *Marvels* set an artistic standard for the industry. Until then, painted comics were an oddity, a medium mostly used by artists trying new techniques. A few books, such as DC's *Black Orchid* and Marvel's *Elektra: Assassin*, received critical acclaim and had decent sales, but never achieved tremendous success. Then came 23-year-old Alex Ross.

He had a concept for a painted anthology series of new stories from various periods in Marvel history which would feature different artists and writers. Marvel had another idea.

"They really didn't want an anthology series," Ross remembers. "They wanted a series that would stand on its own, and that meant one artist and one writer, and one perspective."

Enter Kurt Busiek, who had worked with Ross before as an editor on Marvel's short-lived sci-fi series *Open Space*. The two reshaped Ross' proposal so the series would practically retell the entire history of the Marvel Universe—starting with the creation of the original Human Torch—but with a twist. They'd tell it from the eyes of civilians who lived among the superheroes. "It blossomed into something I didn't even expect," Ross says.

With Busiek handling the story, Ross tackled the paintings. He used live models for his characters and filled every frame with life, giving *Marvels* a realism and grandeur never before seen in comics. Ross' frequent use of irregular-sized frames and splash pages set *Marvels* apart, too, as did its special acetate covers.

Busiek's writing was equally extraordinary. Narrated by photojournalist Phil Sheldon, *Marvels* showed how regular people in the Marvel Universe were affected by the exploits of the Avengers, the Fantastic Four and other costumed heroes. The series brought the god-like champions down to Earth—and fans responded. Despite a hefty $5.95 cover price, all four issues sold out quickly, leading to reprintings, a single-volume compilation and multiple awards for its creators.

Marvel tried duplicating the book's success with other painted projects, including *Tales of the Marvels* and *Code of Honor*, but without Ross or Busiek's involvement, none recaptured *Marvels*' magic.

As for the dynamic duo, *Marvels* would only be the beginning. Busiek continues earning accolades writing books including *The Avengers* and *Thunderbolts*, and Ross has become the industry's most-coveted painter, scoring with the monster-hit *Kingdom Come* mini-series and *Superman: Peace on Earth* book at DC, and cover paintings for various books. The two have even found further success together. When Busiek's creator-owned *Astro City* hits stores, the covers feature paintings by Ross.

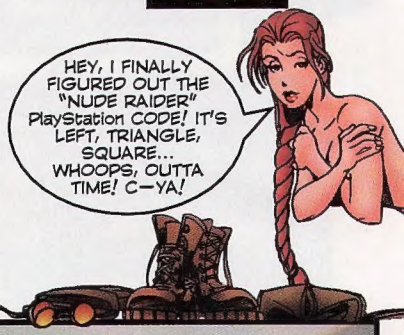
So, when you admire one of Ross' covers or are engrossed in one of Busiek's stories, thank Marvel for rejecting a young artist's proposal for a painted anthology series. Things might have turned out very differently otherwise.

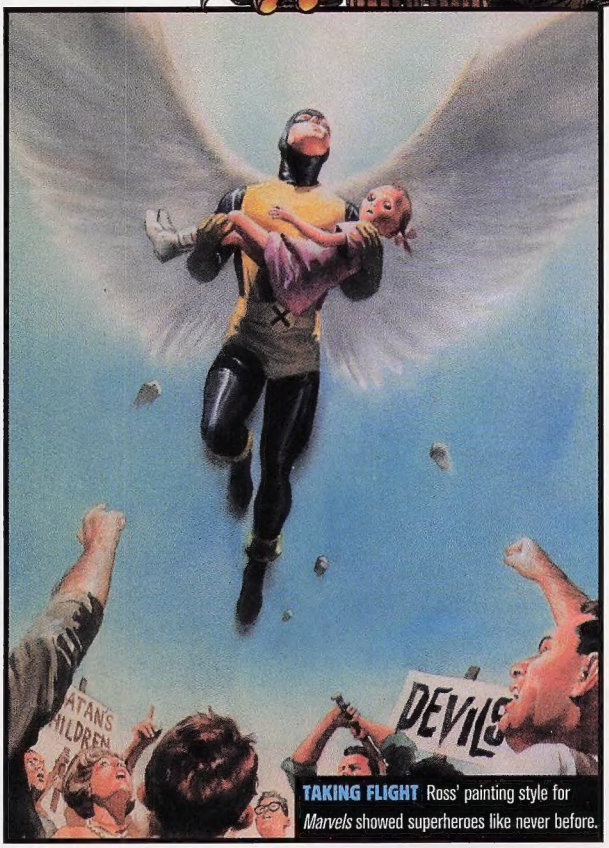
DATELINE

JANUARY 1994

Audiences and critics alike sing the praises of Steven Spielberg's **"Schindler's List"**....In its first season, Chris Carter's **"The X-Files"** continues to build a buzz...The single **"All for Love,"** by Bryan Adams, Rod Stewart and Sting, from the "The Three Musketeers" soundtrack hits No. 1....The **Dallas Cowboys** top the Buffalo Bills 30-13 in Super Bowl XXVIII.

THE X-FILES





TAKING FLIGHT Ross' painting style for *Marvels* showed superheroes like never before.

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